

Christ's Call to Die to Self

by Tim Conway

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5:38-42, focusing on the Sermon on the Mount. It emphasizes the need to go beyond the natural inclination of self-preservation and retaliation, urging listeners to embrace a sacrificial and selfless attitude. The examples provided by Jesus challenge the listeners to die to self, be willing to go the extra mile, and exhibit generosity and forgiveness even in the face of offense or demands. The core message revolves around sanctification as a process of becoming more like Christ through self-denial and a deeper intimacy with God.

Scripture: Matthew 5:38, Hebrews 13:5, 1 Peter 2:21, Romans 12:2, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 2:5

Topics: "Selflessness", "Embracing Forgiveness"

Description

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Transcript

Well, the portion of scripture that we're going to look at this morning is found in Matthew 5, verse 38 through 42, the next section of the Sermon on the Mount. You know, I once heard that a preacher was preaching, and he began preaching, I think it was several nights of some conference the guy was preaching. He got up, he began to preach, he started preaching and the young man would get up and walk out.

Next night, the young man would be there again, he'd start preaching, the young man would get up and walk out. And finally, he was confronted, and he said, well, he said, I hear something that you preach on that I needed to take care of and I needed to go resolve, and so I didn't figure there was any reason listening to more, and he got up and he walked out. Well, I'm not asking any of you to get up and walk out, but the reality is that man listened to the Word of God with the intent of doing it and keeping it.

I am going to, listen, this is the Lord, He's the Creator, He's God, He's our Lord. He said in Luke 6, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do the things I say? You know what happens at the end of this Sermon on the Mount. He says, there is a wise man, he hears what I say and he does it.

We are in the realm now where we're going to get into some verses that, honestly, if these verses don't touch you, it's because you're dancing around so that they miss you. It's because you're not hearing. These verses should, they should do something to each one of us.

What we want, this is sanctification, sanctification is a process, it's holification, it's making us more and more separate, more and more like Christ. We all need to change. Ruby and I have been listening to these Piper bios, and actually I was driving somewhere one day when I didn't have Ruby with me, and Piper said, he said he just could not figure out anybody who didn't want to change.

He said, if you don't want to change, you might as well be dead. He said, isn't that what we live for? And that's exactly right. As Christians, if there's anything, is from the time we get saved until the time we die, this is all about change, change.

And that's what these words are supposed to do. You know, that's why we preach each week. Yes, it's to have bigger and bigger views of God, but see, even that's change.

You recognize more and more. You come to a greater knowledge, a greater intimacy, a greater revelation, greater faith. But it's change.

It's always change that we're looking for. We gather for the preaching of the word because we don't want to stay the same. If you want to stay the same, you're basically saying, I'm good, I'm content with where I'm at.

Who can be in that place? We're going to be challenged by these words. Now listen, verse 38. 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. Now, there's two dangers when we deal with this.

One is absolutizing the text without due respect for the whole flow of thought here. From what, listen, as I told you in the very beginning, if you forget the Beatitudes, you're going to go wrong with this. What we don't want is some unthinking literalism, just some wooden literal take on this without remembering the flow.

And what this is all about. The Beatitudes were broad strokes. Blessed are the poor in spirit and blessed are those who mourn.

Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. You don't want to take this as some detailed regulations about how to live your life.

That's not what these are. These are basically four illustrations of a principle. It's working out what peacemakers look like.

It's working out what the pure in heart are like. This is what we have here. Jesus is emphasizing the spirit of his people.

If you take this as just a rigid set of rules, all you've done is you're just replacing Moses with Jesus. And that's not what you want to do here. That's not the issue.

What these are, if we've got eyes to see, is not something that's universally going to apply to every single situation in your life. But the spirit of what's here should apply to every single situation in your life. That would be the first danger.

The first danger is just you take this as detailed regulations. You apply some wooden literalism to it. But the second danger is this.

It's to immediately say, well, because obviously there are exceptions. I didn't mention last week that we're not supposed to give to somebody that's not willing to work. And see, there's an exception right there.

We don't give to everybody that begs from us. Because if you're not willing to work, scripture also says you shouldn't give to that person. And so you know what you can do? You can start becoming so obsessed with the exceptions that you don't hear what Jesus is actually saying.

And I'll tell you what a danger is. Is when you read these and you get the person that immediately what they want to do is start thinking of every exception possible. That's bad.

So don't become absorbed with all the exceptions to the point that you evade the force of what Jesus is saying here. Now I am going to deal with some of the exceptions. Because I want what... Here's the thing.

I want you to know... I want all of us to recognize what this is not saying. And so I am going to deal with what it's not saying before I deal with what it does say. Now look, verse 38.

You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Now, again, I keep coming back to this because Jesus keeps saying this. Who's he talking about? You need to get so many of the reformed guys.

They really want to press. He's not talking about Moses here. He's talking about the way that the scribes and the Pharisees perverted.

But here's the thing. Unquestionably, he's dealing with an inferior surface external righteousness in the scribes and the Pharisees. They obviously were taking these verses and they were doing something with it.

But you know what he's doing here. He is actually quoting Moses. And there's no reason to skirt that.

No matter who Jesus has in mind when he says you've heard that it was said, the fact is these words themselves come from Moses in more than one place. Just listen to these. Don't turn to them.

Exodus 21. If there is harm, then you shall pay life for life. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.

There it is. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth. I mean, it's verbatim, folks.

Hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. That's Exodus 21, 23, 24, 25. Leviticus 24, 19.

If anyone injures his neighbor as he has done, it shall be done to him. Fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. There it is again, verbatim.

Whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him. Deuteronomy 19, 21. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth.

There it is exactly again. Hand for hand, foot for foot. There's at least three places in the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, where you get this exact wording.

So when Jesus is saying to these people, well, you've heard it said. Well, where had they heard it? You know, whatever the scribes and the Pharisees were saying, Moses said this. Now, Jesus said, I know you've heard all that.

But I say to you, don't resist the one who's evil. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, then what? If anybody slaps you on the cheek, then what? Let me ask you something. Somebody slaps you on the cheek and you apply the rule, eye for an eye, what do you do? You punch him, right? I mean, you strike back.

But Jesus says not to apply that rule. What he says is apply a different rule. Turn your other cheek to them.

But wait, here's the thing. Doesn't an eye for an eye seem fair? Doesn't that seem right? I mean, have you ever watched a TV show where somebody got wronged and then they got the person back? Then you feel good, somewhat. I mean, I'll tell you this.

There is something built into us that appreciates revenge. And that's not wrong, because vengeance belongs to God. You know, vengeance is actually a good thing.

It's just where we're at right now, we're not supposed to seek the vengeance. But the thing about an eye for an eye is it seems fair. I mean, don't we want laws in our land that basically have some degree of equity and impartial and don't we want that? Of course we do.

I mean, can you imagine living in the land where it's excessive either way? Where it's not eye for an eye? Do you know what it was like in this country back in the 18th century? Does anybody know? Do you know how many laws were in the books? Do you know how many crimes were capital offenses in this country? Do you know if you stole the handkerchief you could hang for it? In 1810, there were 222 books on the law in England that you could hang for. Cutting a tree down, killing a deer on the wrong land could cost you your life. Now see, we don't want that.

But on the other hand, do we want murders to murder and we just slap them on the wrist and turn the other cheek, let them go murder somebody else? We don't want that either. I mean, the reality is that, well listen, verse 39. When Jesus says, but I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil.

What is Jesus aiming at and saying this? I mean, listen, we need to recognize what this is not saying. Don't resist the evil one. Does the Bible ever tell us to resist evil? Like resist the devil? Isn't the devil an evil one? Are we supposed to let him come up and slap us on the side and with some temptation and then say, well, do it again? Obviously, he's not talking that way.

Listen, what we need to recognize is this. Jesus is not speaking to parents resisting evil in their little people like that right there, Levi. Goodbye.

But he's obviously not speaking to parents and saying, don't regard Proverbs. He's obviously not negating Romans 13 that says that we've got governing civil authorities out there that have been committed with the sword. They're expected to use the sword.

He's not saying we don't resist evil in the church. Obviously, he would be negating what he preaches in the same book in Matthew 18 if we're not supposed to deal with sin in the church. He's obviously not talking about that kind of thing.

Do you recognize this? There was a day when they struck Jesus and he did not turn the other cheek. In fact, he challenged his persecutors. Do you remember that? 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? See, he wasn't just silent. As much as Jesus was silent oftentimes when he was persecuted, he was not there. You see, because he was before a court.

He was before the high priest. And it's very interesting that even when Paul, remember they wanted to let him out of prison at Philippi after they had wrongly beat him? He didn't just turn the other cheek and say, beat me again and then just release me and I'm not going to take issue. You know what? When it had to do with the fact that the courts, the magistrate was doing wrong at a civil level, both Christ and Paul challenged them.

Very interesting. So, here's the thing. If we simply take these words coldly, mechanically, literally, and what's going to happen is we're going to fail to see the spirit of what Jesus is teaching here.

The key is this. We want to look at the four different examples that he's given to us and we want to see the common thread that runs through each one of these. So, I'm going to tell you right up front.

I'm going to tell you where we're headed. This is nothing other than the teaching that Jesus gives us very plainly in other places about dying to self. Listen, what he's talking about is self.

He's not talking about you parenting. He's not talking about the church government and how we handle sin in the church. He's not talking about the civil authorities out here.

You know what he's talking about? You as an individual dying to self. That's the issue here. That's what's on the table.

This doesn't have to do with whether we should have capital offense or not, or whether you should be on a jury, or whether war is right. So many people want to apply it to all these areas. That is not what this has to do with at all.

He's not dealing with fair laws in the land. He's not at all speaking to the government. He's not speaking to the court systems or church government or anything.

You know, he's not trying to bring reform to the civil government. What he's doing is he's talking directly to his disciples, and he is saying through four examples, this is how I want you to die to self. Self.

Your attitude towards yourself. Jesus, Jesus wants us to die. This is one of the hardest things about being a Christian.

This is, this is what makes the way so narrow. Even the gate narrow. It's because we've got to die.

We've got to die to self. Ourselves, oh brethren, we're our own gods. We, we worship ourselves.

And when we come to Christ, this is the very first step. It's recognizing something about ourselves. We're bad.

We deserve hell. We can't save ourselves. We can't figure this out.

We need help. And there's a bowing and there's a surrendering. But you know what? Just because we come that first day broken, we come through that narrow gate.

The way is narrow too. And we have such a tendency to want to retaliate, to want to defend ourselves, to protect ourselves, to protect our stuff. We are so me centered.

Our tendency is to insist on our own rights, demand retaliation if anybody offends us. I mean, look, I'm not proud of this, but I use it in this example. There was a time my friend and I, we had a slingshot and we were upstairs in his house and he had an open window and there were kids playing out there.

And we had these tiny little rocks and we took them in there and we bang, we shot it out there. And the children were playing and we hit what was probably the oldest sister. And it probably felt like she got stung, but she spun around and she just pushed her little brother because she thought he did it.

And that image is in my mind. That's how we are. That's how we are designed.

Somebody does something and we want to strike back. And that's why there's almost something satisfying when you watch a TV show where somebody gets that revenge. Even if it's somewhat.

But men are like that. They're wired that way. Our natural instinct is to deify self, to strike back if somebody wants to hurt us.

We see ourselves as being most important. We get appalled. We get shocked.

We get bent out of shape. If somebody touches our stuff, hurts our stuff, insults our children. If somehow we are offended, we're hurt, we're insulted, people encroach on our rights.

Somebody parks in front of our house. That's my spot out there. And that's how it is here in this country.

In the U.S. we all have driveways and we have garages and stuff here. Everybody's really protective of their parking places. And they get bent out of shape.

But now listen, this is the theme that Christ is dealing with in these verses. So let's look more closely. Now look, go back to the text there in 38.

You've heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Now one of the primary things to be said about that is this. One of the texts that I read to you where this shows up is Deuteronomy.

Just listen. This is the context in which eye for an eye and tooth for tooth is found. If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days.

Now see, if you read the context there, what you need to recognize is the law was not designated to be discharged by individuals who had a vendetta with their neighbor. This law, this idea of an eye for an eye

and a tooth for a tooth applied to the civil authorities. Now they could be religious authorities, but see there were judges, there were priests.

That is the realm in which we want fair laws like this. Jesus is not addressing that. The whole question in Jesus' day seems to have become this.

It's like the scribes and the Pharisees were operating like, well if somebody offends me, how can I vent my bitterness and my hatred and get revenge and still do it technically keeping the law? That's what had become of this. It wasn't a civil issue anymore. They were taking these words that were originally meant to be carried out in a court and they were applying them to themselves.

How can I get away as much as possible with what I want to get away with and still technically keep the law? These guys sought to justify their own bitterness and vengeance and malice and hatred. Do it under a cloak of this precise law keeping. That was the issue.

Jesus is not speaking to judges here. He's speaking to Christians. And you need to recognize this.

He's not speaking to lost people. To expect lost people to live like a Christian, he's not speaking to nations, he's not speaking to lost, he's not speaking to the world at large. He's speaking to Christians, to his own disciples.

This teaching has nothing whatever to do with a man who's not a Christian. You need to recognize it because a man that's not a Christian will not be able to live this way. A man who's not a Christian is selfish and that's got to be broken.

It takes a savior to save us from self. The lost man can't do this. He's speaking to people that he's already described in the Beatitudes.

The merciful. And to ask for Christian conduct from someone who's not born again is just, it's an impossibility. Dying to self.

If we're truly going to walk the Christian path, this is it. This is the path. Dying.

Death. We must have a right attitude towards our self. And the thing is, we tend to be way overly sensitive when it comes to self.

Spirit of self-defense immediately rises. And that's what Jesus is wanting to kill here. That spirit of self-defense.

The desire for revenge. Retaliation. Jesus wants to kill that thing in us.

That's how he's seeking to protect self. So here it is. First example.

Let's look at it. There are four examples here that really bring this whole thing to life. Now look, this is certainly not an exhaustive list.

This is just four scenarios that if you will actually, if you don't just sit back and hear this just as teaching that kind of goes by your head, and you're half thinking about dinner this afternoon, and you know, getting some coffee and tea afterwards. But if you really just, if you'll put yourself in this place, what you have is four scenarios that'll test us to this deeper principle of dying to self. I say to you, verse 39, do not resist the

one who is evil.

But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Now I'm assuming that wherever you all are from, you have an idea. If somebody took a glove, one man took a glove and slapped another man across the face with it, what happens? A fight? Does nobody know the glove across the face rule? It's a challenge.

Typically that would result in a duel. In fact, my understanding was this. They said that a knight, when before they kind of cultured it a little bit, you know how the queen like taps a knight on the shoulder three times? That in the olden days, they would clunk him on the shoulder three times fairly hard and then slap him across the face, the knight.

Like that was the last offense you can ever take without seeking your honor. In other words, anytime anybody dishonors you from this point forward as a knight, you've got to defend your right. It was an insult.

You can imagine. Somebody slaps you across the face. I mean, you know how it is.

You can have somebody and they kind of come up. They start hitting you too hard in the face. Basically, my understanding, I got this from John Stott.

He said that in the Middle East and in the Near East, that for to be hit across the cheek, the right cheek with the back of somebody's hand was the insult. So this is what Jesus is talking about. He's not talking about you.

If somebody slaps you, he's not talking about governments and not talking about juries, not talking about war. He's talking about you personally being offended. And you know what? We don't have to go exploring here.

You all have been hurt by somebody else. You've all been offended by somebody else. You've all been in the place.

Even though you might be more subdued, you were in the place where you wanted to take somebody's head off. You have been attacked. You've been harmed.

Something has happened. And this is the idea. This is what we have here.

What's the natural disposition when somebody offends you like that? They slap you across the face. Is the immediate thing to turn to them the other side and allow them to keep going? Typically, it's like that little girl. You want to turn around and bang! You want to push your little brother because he just did something.

It wasn't him. And the fact is that's the insulting blow. And then what crops up? A desire to defend self.

And you know what? Some people, they're quick with a fist. Other people, they're quick with the tongue. Well, you know what? I'm going to... That person did this.

I'm going to shoot back with my tongue, ready to come out swinging. Jesus is telling us right here that He wants us to be rid of this spirit of retaliation, that desire to defend self, the desire to strike back, inflict harm. You can see it.

Jesus imagines, you know, a man or a woman come up to you and unprovoked, they strike you across the face. I mean, we see this in road rage. What is road rage all about? I don't know how much you guys have that here.

But I know that's... People get all bent out of shape. Why? Well, they feel like they've been encroached upon. And, you know, you realize, seriously, Hollywood loves to produce their films, their movies, one after another.

I mean, that's basically the storyline. You see a person and something horrible happens to them and the whole movie plays out for them getting revenge in the end. And it's all, you know... We wouldn't like it if they didn't get the revenge in the end.

If they tried and they tried and they tried and in the end they failed. People aren't going to go watch movies like that because then you leave and you feel horrible about it. They love to... Just the spirit of self-defense, the immediate instinct, get them back.

You know, it was very interesting that the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor back in 1941 because they felt like if they struck America and did due damage to their Navy, they knew America could not be conquered by them. They recognized that. But they thought if they did sufficient damage to our Navy and then quickly struck back at Midway, what they really were trying to do is bring us to the bargaining table.

They felt like, well, Americans would be, you know, they would be discouraged and humiliated and then they would go to the bargaining table. That is so odd that a people that actually have a thing like saving face would actually even think that way. That was such a miscalculation about human nature.

Do you know what Americans did? They lined up to enlist. Why? They wanted revenge. And it didn't matter how many Midways and Pearl Harbors you had, they wanted revenge.

And there could have been 10 of them, but all that's going to do... See, that's how mankind is. That's how we are. Man wants revenge.

And this is what Jesus is trying to kill. I mean, Christian, we're to be altogether new creations and old things are to pass away. And he said, you need to carry your cross and it's an instrument of death.

He said, I want you to die to self. And you need to be people that when you're offended, can I tell you something in the church? The closer we get, I've said this before, the closer we get, the more God uses the church, the more we're involved in things together, the more we involve ourselves in ministries together and minister one another, the more time we spend with each other, the more possibility we're going to have of rubbing people wrong. And the reality is thin skin people are just a blemish on the church.

They are a massive blemish. And you know what I mean by thin skin? I'm talking about people that just get offended really easy. They receive this insult and somehow they've got to strike back.

And usually it's with the tongue. And so you just speak evil. And brethren, this is the kind of thing that he's seeking to kill.

Kill the spirit of retaliation. You know what? Hudson Taylor. Very interesting.

You know Hudson Taylor? He was the first among the British missionaries that went inland into China. Maybe not the very first, but in a day when not many were going in, he did. And he began to dress like the

Chinese.

In fact, you know what? He so mimicked their way of dress and their hair and everything. And it was really, he said it was massively uncomfortable. And yet he did it for the sake of the gospel.

Well, you know what happened? He was at a riverside one time and he hailed a boat to take him across. Apparently, the man navigating the boat, kind of ferrying people back and forth across this river, knew him. And they knew, well, that's the British missionary.

And so they came, the guy came sailing over to where Taylor was. And right as he got there, a wealthy Chinese man traveling for business or something, came wanting a boat. He, the way the culture is over there, or was, he thought Taylor was basically a lowly Chinaman.

He's wealthy. He came up and he shoved Taylor and gave him such a blow that it knocked him over off his feet into the mud. Once he did that, the man navigating the boat said, no, sir, I can't take you.

He said this to his fellow countrymen. He said, I was hailed by the foreigner. Well, now the guy's shocked because he did not realize he just did this to a foreigner.

Taylor said nothing. The guy navigating the boat said the boat's his. And so Taylor came and he got on and he invited the wealthy man to go across with him.

And then he was able to preach the gospel to him. And he said that conversation they had going across that river left a deep impact upon that man. You see, this is the issue.

And Peter says, to this you've been called. You see, brethren, this is what we've been called to. This is what Jesus wants from his people.

Why? Because this, just like it is in Taylor, this is what turns the world upside down. This kind of reaction. To this you've been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example.

That means we need to imitate him so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin. Deceit was not found in his mouth.

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. And we can be insulted in many ways.

The Lord desires to produce in us a spirit that does not easily take offense. That's the issue. It doesn't defend itself.

Death to self. Death to self-esteem and self-importance. Listen, you remember what he said here.

Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees. Do you recognize thin-skinned people in the church are not exhibiting a righteousness that exceeds the scribes and the Pharisees? Easily offended people are exhibiting a righteousness that's just like theirs. Always trying to get back.

Always wagging the tongue. Anybody that steps on your toes, boy, you're going to let them have it. Either you're going to let them know or what usually happens is you let someone else know.

You just degrade them. You slander them. You gossip about them.

That happens all the time in the church. All the time. Somewhere, I read the story.

I can't place it. It seems like something that came out of Pensacola, Florida. In the chapel library there.

I'm certain it is. I read a story. There was a woman.

She got married. Her husband had her father-in-law move. He needed to be cared for.

He was old. I think the mother-in-law had died. So father-in-law is living there.

Well, her husband went off to work each day. So it was father-in-law and the wife at home together each day. This guy made her life miserable.

He was wicked. He relentlessly provoked her. And you know, her husband, it was his dad.

And he just didn't really do anything. She went with tears to the pastor. And the pastor told her this.

Every time he provokes you, every time he does something wickedly, respond with kindness. She knew he had a favorite kind of cookie. And so when he provoked her, she would make him cookies.

And one of the times when she did it, and she came and after he'd done something really nasty to her, she put down the cookies in front of him. And he fell out of his chair on his face, just weeping. Victory won.

I mean, it worked. God uses that. Not just with Hudson Taylor, but this was a common woman.

Now here's a second example. Second example, verse 40. So the first one is somebody offends us.

We're willing to be offended again without striking back. That's the example we have from Jesus. In fact, they struck him.

They smote him. They crowned him with thorns. They stripped his clothes off of him.

They gambled them away, cast lots for them. They drove spikes through him and he prayed for them. Father, they don't forgive them.

They don't know what they do. Last night, I pulled up a documentary on the persecuted church. There was a teacher, Muslim, Khartoum, Sudan.

He had a student in his class that was a Christian. He said, anytime anything went wrong in the class, they blamed it on the Christian. He said, he admitted that Christian kid was the humblest, nicest guy in the class.

But it just provoked this teacher. He got to the place where he just hated him. And he said to the other Muslims, we're going to kill him.

And so they hid it up in a tree along the way that they knew he walked going home. And they waited for him. And they jumped out of the tree on top of him.

And they beat him just shy of death. And they left him thinking that he would die. This Muslim teacher became a Christian.

His family disowned him. His family had a funeral. They actually got a casket.

They actually have a grave site where they buried the casket. Well, he was imprisoned. I think they imprisoned him for seven weeks in a basement where there were dead bodies.

And it was a horrible thing. He couldn't lay down. And anyway, 25 years later, he was teaching the gospel, teaching biblical teaching, I guess, in Cairo, Egypt.

And a man walked up to him. And he said, do you recognize me? And he did not recognize him. It was that kid that they had so beat.

He said his arm was broke and never had healed right. His leg was broke, didn't heal right. There was a scar.

He was blind in one eye. All from the beating they gave him that night. He said, I have prayed for you for 25 years.

And he showed him his Bible. And in the front page of the Bible, he had this man's name written. This man beat him this close to death.

And he spent the next 25 years of his life praying for this man. And God heard him. God saved this guy.

I mean, a hateful Muslim. Here's a second example. If anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let them have your cloak as well.

I mean, we see the very same thread running through this verse. Our Lord puts his finger on our tendency to want our rights. Because you know what suing is? If somebody sues you for something, it's because you think it belongs to you and they think it belongs to them.

And so they're taking you to court to get it. Oh, how suing each other. That kind of thing.

People's rights. I mean, this example portrays someone who believes they have a right to something and somebody else believes they have a right to that. And I don't think they do have a right to it, but they do think.

And so they take me to court. That's why they're suing me. And there's a tendency.

I always want to insist on our own rights. You watch, oh, you just watch how men and women handle inheritances. Even Christians, professing Christians.

I remember a brother over there in one of the churches just south of San Antonio. He told me that his dad died and then his mother died. When his mother died, he went to his mom and dad's house only to see his sister's husband backed up to the garage or to the barn loading a bunch of tools in a welder.

That was his dad's tools. But sister, that was also her dad. And so the husband felt like he had rights to it and they didn't wait to have.

I'll tell you, inheritance is brethren. And I can remember being challenged with this when my dad died. My dad told me, he said, we had a, my great, great, great grandfather, I believe Simon and how many greats, but he went out to the gold rush and he actually went through the Panama Canal and he went around and he had a revolver.

And my dad told me, you know, you're the first born and this is going to be given to you. My brother took it. And so here my dad dies.

My dad wanted me to preach the funeral. And I'm thinking about my brother and, you know, he's up there and my brother said something crazy. I was talking to him and he said, you know, Tim, the attorney told me that I can take everything and you can't do anything about it.

It's like, why would he even say that? I mean, I wasn't fighting him for anything. But I sat down there at my desk that morning that I was going to go to the airport, get on that plane and fly up to Michigan and preach my dad's funeral. And I came across the text in Hebrews 13 and just the fact that I am never going to leave you or forsake you.

And that is in the context of, brethren, it's in the context of, I mean, you're just, you're being freed from all of this. I recognized, I mean, I just felt this feeling come across me that it doesn't matter. It's okay.

I mean, my brother can take everything. I have the Lord. I mean, what's that compared? And he's never going to leave me or forsake me.

And I mean, I had just such a sense of peace and I was able to go up there and I mean, I've just not had any issues with my brother over that. But you watch people over inheritances. You want to see something to divide families? You want to see something get people to sue each other? Well, you just mess with their inheritance.

This got to rise out of Paul when people sued each other. You remember this, brother goes to law against brother before unbelievers to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? Pastor Xi, it's spelled H-S-I.

He was saved in the days of Hudson Taylor. He was associated with the China Inland Mission. They wrote a biography on him, Pastor Xi.

His name actually was something like Demon Slayer in Chinese that he had a real God-given gift to deal with demons. But you know what happened? The Chinese especially, and it's true today too, they sue each other all the time. And when Xi was saved and he was leading the Christians and God was saving a bunch of the Christians, they basically determined among themselves, all the Christians, they vowed, we will never sue anybody ever again.

But guess what? God put them to the test. As soon as they vowed that, you'd have a young believer. He'd vow, I'm never going to sue anybody again.

And you know what would happen inevitably? The neighbor would move the fence and take some of his land. And you know what Xi said? He recognized that the young believers who sought to honor the Lord by not suing, that if the neighbor moved the fence and took some of the young believer's property, God would like cause their pigs to start dying or not able to breed. And suddenly they'd recognize.

And God usually worked it out where with the young believers, if they sought to honor the Lord by not suing, God gave them the property back. God restored the thing. God made the thing right.

But he said that the older believers, typically it didn't work that way. They didn't get back what was taken. In other words, their faith had been tested and tried.

And they were more mature. And so God did not bring it back. But that's just an interesting story that stands out in my mind.

Suing each other. Third example, 541. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

Now this has the least familiarity in our culture and context, but it's not hard to get the feel for self-rising. I mean, you remember there is an example of this in scripture. Do you remember when Jesus was being led out to be crucified? He had a certain guy come in from the country and they laid the cross on him.

Anybody remember what his name was? Simon. Simon of Cyrene. Now think about this.

You see, you can read that story and you don't think much about it. But then you come here. I mean, you recognize what happened.

That basically the government had this right, they had this power to commandeer a man to carry a load a mile. And so this guy, can you imagine? What was he doing? Well, he wasn't coming to town to carry the cross. He was coming to town to do whatever he was doing.

Can you imagine? There's a Roman soldier over there. He says, hey you. Me.

Yeah, I want you to carry this. Way out there. Yeah, that thing's heavy.

Do it. I mean, start thinking. Put yourself in that position.

You've got your own thing. You've got your own business. You're busy about your own life.

And here they come along and come. Yesterday I brought up that, I actually looked the story up. That Hitler wanted to take the Rochdale Town Hall back to Germany.

And I actually found that. It's well known. The architecture of the Rochdale Town Hall.

Now I haven't seen it. But they're saying it's one of the most impressive pieces of architecture in the country. And you know what? They actually believe that Hitler lived over here in Liverpool for a little bit of a season.

And that he may have actually visited it firsthand back before World War I. And that's how he knew about it. He said they might have known about it through surveillance. But can you imagine if the Nazis took over? And you're out doing your job.

And they want you to start carrying bricks from Rochdale Town Hall towards the coast. Because they're going to ship the whole building back. I mean that's how it was.

The Romans, I mean they were commandeering Jews. These are the enemy. Can you imagine how you'd feel? Can you imagine? I mean we don't like it if our own government encroaches upon us.

We don't like it if they increase our taxes. If they tell us we've got to do this or that or the other. Can you imagine if it's the Nazis? Can you imagine if it's the Romans? Imagine if it's a conquering force? And yet Jesus says, don't rebel against that.

Listen, you go the first mile cheerfully. But you go the second mile cheerfully as well. And you know what's going to happen then? That Roman soldier's going to say, what's with this guy? What's with you? I had

this, I hope you all get to meet him one day.

Some of you probably have. But I was thinking of Matt Wilkinson with his big old smile. And him going the second mile.

And just thinking, I need to be like that. Anybody know Matt? No, you don't know him. That doesn't register with anybody.

No, they were in, our folks went to India. And we got in a precarious situation at one point. And the military was coming in.

And John Seitzman told me that Matt Wilkinson was out there in that field with this big smile on his face. And just melted all these military guys that were probably coming out to harass us. But anyway, you see how all of these come back to self.

Whether somebody strikes you in the face. Whether somebody's suing you for your stuff. Or whether somebody suddenly commandeers you.

You know how self would rise. It's like, leave me alone. I don't want to carry your baggage.

I don't want to carry that cross. I got something to do. Don't you recognize? I had a commitment over here.

I'm supposed to be over here. Who are you? I'm the Roman soldier and we've conquered you. That's who I am.

But Jesus, you see the attitude. Here's the fourth example. We're just about done.

So 542. Give to the one who begs from you. Do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Jesus puts his finger on this proneness to cling to stuff. It's mine. But what right does that guy have? You know, there's a guy begging over there.

Well, I'm going to avoid him. I'm going to walk around this way. Why? He wants my money.

I don't want to give him my money. Now, I know you might run through your head. Well, you know, I don't want to support that guy's drinking habit.

But you know what? I could probably run over to this McDonald's and buy him a burger. And if he really is hungry, I could actually feed him. But I don't want to do that.

I don't want to spend my time. I don't want to spend my money. Somebody asked me for something.

Somebody wants to borrow something. Somebody goes, that's mine. I work for it.

I mean, who's he? Why doesn't he work and get his stuff for himself? You see what Jesus is saying here. Give to the one who begs from you. I'll tell you this.

The roots of our hearts, they grow down deep into things. And we want to protect them. That's mine.

That's my phone. That's my computer. That's my house.

That's my car. That's my Bible. That's my book.

That's my stuff. That's my bank account. That's my money in my pocket.

And see, if they take it, then I don't have it anymore. God's gifts replace God. And I can't listen to the needs and the requests of others.

If I do, I'll suffer. I'll be the one going without. I can't.

I've got to watch out for number one. After all, I need that thing. That's mine.

He's rebuking that spirit of those who are always considering themselves. Whether they're struck in the face, whether they're getting their coat sued away from them, getting compelled to carry the baggage, or asked to give away their goods. I mean, you know what each example does here.

It reveals just our constant tendency to be watching out for self and for our self-interest. To be always on the lookout for insults or attacks or injuries. Always in the defensive attitude.

Always on edge. You know, so delicately, just sensitively poised. The slightest disturbance can just upset it all.

People encroach on me. Just leave me alone. Back off.

I don't want to carry your stuff and I don't want to give you anything. Stay away. Don't sue me.

That's mine. I'll sue you. Don't slap me.

I'm going to slap you back. I mean, we're just so wired that way. And Jesus comes along and he emptied himself.

And he just left it all the glory behind. And he came to die. And he came to empty.

And he said, I could call down 12 legions. I mean, he had all this at his disposal. And he said, I did not come to be served.

I came to serve and I came to pour my life out a ransom for many. And he's saying to us, come on, follow me. And listen, it's all going to burn up.

Our time here is short. It's going to burn up. You can't take any of it with you.

And I'll tell you this, what Jesus is basically describing, as we've seen in some of these examples, this, you have to recognize that behind the going one mile and then going the second mile, if you should feel behind this is an evangelistic thrust. It's almost like Jesus sees us in that capacity of reaching the world behind all of this. When he talks about traveling that extra mile, what's that going to accomplish? I'll tell you what it's going to accomplish.

It's going to give you a testimony with the person who wants you to carry the stuff. You're constantly showing forth a testimony. When you say you're a follower of Christ, he came and he gave his life.

He gave his all. He emptied himself. What are you giving? To be Christians who are afraid to give.

Oh, we don't want to be there. The condition our Lord is describing is one in which a man simply can't be hurt. You see that? Somebody slapped me.

You didn't hurt me. I'm going to glory. The Lord is mine.

I'm the most wealthy person imaginable. Do you recognize what you have? An eternal weight of glory is before you. You can't hurt me.

I mean, if you want to borrow that or if I need to give that to you, if you want to sue that from me, well, I can throw the other thing on top. I can give you twice as much. It doesn't hurt me.

You want me to walk and go the second mile? I can do that. But you see this, oh, this hits us right where we live, folks. Right where we live.

No man can hope to live like Jesus calls us unless they're born again. I mean, that's the reality here. And what we've got to do is we've got to face this head on.

You know what? We need to be honest with our hearts. When there's demands put on us, when people encroach upon our time, our comfort, our pleasure, our stuff, our money, we need to ask honestly, what's going on here? You know, it can be so easy to say, oh, the Bible says that if you won't work, you shouldn't eat. And so we're very quick to run there anytime anybody wants anything.

But is that the attitude of Jesus? I find that Jesus gave and gave and gave and gave and gave. And he gave to bad, he hung out with sinners. And he gave to them.

I mean, we need the kind of self-examination that's essential at this point. Because when you get a rise in your own heart, you really need to be asking yourself, where is this coming from? And I am consumed with some kind of self-greatness here. I mean, yes, brethren, this can be extremely painful.

Why? Because dying is painful. Dying to self, it's going to hurt. But what this is self, self, self, denial of self.

We're so used to putting ourselves on the throne instead of God. Get bent out of shape, we get frustrated, we get angry, we get stingy. We want to strike out.

Thinking about ourselves and instead of communing with God. Listen, holiness is all about this. It's deliverance from self.

If you really recognize Jesus came to save us from us. He came to save us from self-worship, self-absorption. Because brethren, we are not worthy of worship.

But God is. And when we find our all in Him, you're going to find the greatest satisfaction imaginable. The way to the deeper knowledge and intimacy with God is right here.

Sometimes if you wonder, why do I feel stagnated in my life, in my Christian walk, in my Christian life? You can come back right here. Because I'll tell you, if you go look at the life of some of these folks, that like if you were to ask Hudson Taylor, just being free to be pushed in the mud, and then joyfully go across the river and preach the gospel to the guy. I mean what freedom there is in that.

Where you just simply can't be hurt. There's nothing I have to hold on to in this life that makes me vulnerable like this. But brethren, there's a real connection here.

Intimacy and fellowship and a deeper knowledge with God is had by traversing these paths, these lonely valleys of soul, poverty, relinquishing, renouncing everything. Jesus said it, unless you forsake all that

you have, you can't be my disciples. Oh, we read that.

We have to watch our hearts, because I guarantee you, every one of us have a Mount Moriah that we need to take our Isaacs to. We all have those Isaacs, the things that the Lord is challenging us. And we need to be honest.

Lord, what is it? Show me, bring me, give us grace. Show us if we're holding on to anything too tightly. Show us, sanctification is a process, but I recognize this.

There's something in every one of your lives about self that's most ugly to God, and most preventing you from having a fuller depth of intimacy with God. Find out what it is and kill it. It's a process, but we want to be people who are no longer slaves to the tyranny of stuff, and things, and inheritances, and stuff we can be sued over, and our rights, and our reputation, and this me, me.

Christ promised to cleanse us from our idols. And Lord, I'm going to, Lord, I ask you, cleanse every one of us from our idols. You know what they are.

I don't. Father, I pray that you'd help us walk in those steps. That's what Peter said.

He left us an example. We're supposed to follow in those steps. Lord, I pray for the grace.

I pray, Lord, for the grace of God to be upon us as a church, to really make strides in this area. Lord, please do it. You promised to uproot the idols, to deliver us.

And so we call upon you to uphold that promise of the new covenant. We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

You're dismissed.

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