



Daily Verse and Comment

Matthew 5:38-42

(38) "You have heard that it was said, '*An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.*' (39) But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. (40) If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. (41) And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. (42) Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

New King James Version

Notice verse 39: "But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." He speaks of a slap, something every culture views as insulting rather than damaging. It may do damage to the person's ego, but it is not something ordinarily intended to harm. Rather, it is intended to put down. Not only does a person get a slap on the right cheek, even worse is to be backhanded on the left (most people are right-handed). A whack with the back of the hand is even more insulting than the first slap with an open palm.

[Jesus](#) is trying to open our minds to something here. He is describing cases involving offense or insult. Such insults or [offenses](#) may not come by means of an actual slap but through [gossip](#) or maybe by being taken advantage of at work. The boss finds out that you are a good worker, so he piles more on you than you can actually handle. Then your good attitude begins to sour because the boss is taking advantage of you, and you begin to feel offended.

The first action (or reaction) in such cases is usually to retaliate, or to get even in some way—to get some measure of satisfaction. "It's our natural right, isn't it?" we might argue. Natural, yes, but spiritual, no!

[God](#) instructs us to submit because He is teaching a Christian to think in a certain way: to think of his duties, his responsibilities, not his privileges. To

whom are our duties and responsibilities? They are to God, not to the self. Our first responsibility is always to God. The first and great commandment is toward Him ([Matthew 22:37-38](#)). The second is toward ourselves and others ([Matthew 22:39](#)). He is telling us, then, to submit to Him in instances in which we are insulted.

He wants us to be [peacemakers](#) ([Matthew 5:9](#)). It takes two to fight, and when one refuses, the fight usually goes out of the other person quickly. They may not lose their anger, but the fight usually stops. Once [peace](#) begins to be restored, then a Christian can appeal his case and begin to work matters out.

This passage shows us that we are to make a certain kind of response. We can do it either as a grim duty to be resented or as a service gladly rendered. We need to do it, not so much for the other person's benefit, but for God's—out of deep respect and godly fear. We thus have a choice as to how we can respond. Jesus has instructed us about how He wants us to respond. He wants us to be willing to go the extra mile.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:
[Submitting \(Part 2\)](#)



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