

Wednesday in the Word
Digging Deeper
Matthew 5:38-42
No Justice, No Peace?

Why was the Bible written? (Luke 22:37, John 20:31, 2 Timothy 3:16). One of the biggest words in the language of man is the word 'IF'. God created man in perfection and with the full intention of enjoying the benefits of a beautiful relationship with us. We broke the rules immediately and have suffered the consequences ever since. (Romans 3:23, 5:12). We cannot straighten out our minds and hearts. We cannot control our behavior. God has every right to destroy every one of us because of our disobedience. **If** we had only obeyed we would have prevented so much misery. **If** we had stayed true to the Lord it would have benefited us all. **If** we had never sinned we would never have seen the mercy of God. In giving us the bible, He implanted His Holy Spirit into the written word because in our great and constant rebellion it was imperative to reveal himself as the God of mercy and grace. (1 Corinthians 2:10, Ephesians 1:13). Take a moment to read Exodus 21:12-36. In His Institution of government God imparted to us His decree of capital punishment. In the government's failure to properly carry out God's laws, man in his emotional explosivity takes the law into his own hands and is not satisfied with an eye for an eye or tooth for tooth. Man reached a point long ago where it was "you hit me, I hit you twice as hard". Just like Satan we have come to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10. Yes we are just like Satan when we seek retribution) We do this against one another in an abundance of overreaction when we feel we have been dealt with unjustly by them. Jesus in His quote in our text for today in Matthew 5 recounts this decree of capital punishment and offers a high spiritual alternative. He was not removing the government from its responsibility to carry out the punishment of evil. He was detailing how we ought to live with one another on a day-to-day basis. Review all of chapter 5 for more. Rather than run to law or the court system with a demand for reciprocation we are to act as God has acted toward us. With mercy and grace (Hebrews 4:16). If we could destroy someone in retaliation, would that truly make up for the crime in the first place? If you have done me wrong I have the right to expect at least equal justice but God is telling us through the words of Jesus that we can live by a higher law. The law of love. (Romans 13:8, 10 and Galatians 5:14) Mercy, grace and forgiveness are among the highest qualities of God and He fully expects us to reflect those qualities to our fellow man. In today's text Jesus' implication is that we are displaying God through our own behavior. That does not mean we will be accepted or pleasing to others. We may even be further abused and mistreated. But by displaying His qualities of godliness in us it is hoped that those who are called to eternal life will recognize God in our behavior and begin to search their own hearts and perhaps listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. (Mark 2:17). Jesus does not say that we should continually take the abuse of others. What He is saying is that the gospel is chief among our responsibilities and only by fully sharing the very character of the gospel in our own lives will we fully represent God properly so that a person's heart may be made sensitive to God's ways. Read about the martyrs that have filled our history and lovingly and fearlessly represented God. In defiance of evil they stood in righteousness displaying Christ-like dignity. The courts must

decide how to deal with criminality. Man proves constantly that he overreacts through emotion and cannot meet out justice properly. In our true love of others we can turn and walk away from violence, we can offer more than we are required to hand over, we can do twice as much as we are asked to do or go twice as far as we are asked to go or even lend and share solely for the good of others with no thought of glorifying ourselves. In doing these things we glorify our Heavenly Father. (Matthew 5:16) Even if He is the only one who sees it or recognizes it. Our non confrontational responses will glorify God. We will never stop the abuses of man but we can make the wiser decision to live by the spirit not by the flesh. (Romans 8:4-9) God honors that and there are rewards awaiting us for proper Godly behavior, in this life and the next. These things are hard to do but they are expected from the children of God. Sometimes the most difficult behaviors to display become easier when we understand the Commandments of God. They were not laid down before us as a Harbinger of Doom if we fail. They were handed to us by a loving Father who is instructing His children in how to best represent His family. Sometimes we do manage to get it right but He tells us not to glory in our own accomplishments. He simply says, "This is what I've expected from you and required you to do". Luke 17:10 You will not please man. Pleasing God can be rather easy if we allow His Holy Spirit in us to guide our actions. Be strong enough not to fight back. Be strong enough to go the extra mile. Be strong enough to forgive, which is truly the key to turning the other cheek. Be strong enough to be merciful and graceful. Be strong in the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel 3:14, Luke 1:80. May God bless you all as you seek to please and honor Him in your interactions with others.