

Matthew 5:38–42

Entrusting Dignity, Rights, Liberty, and Prosperity to Christ

Saturday, February 10, 2024 • Read Matthew 5:38–42

Questions from the Scripture text: What did they hear (v38)? What was said (cf. Ex 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21)? Who now says different (v39)? What does He say not to do? What does this imply the scribes and Pharisees had taught from those texts? To what sort of incident does Jesus now refer? On what cheek? What does He say for the disciple to do in response? What might someone want to do in v40? To take away what? What does Jesus say to do in that case? And who might compel the believer to do what in v41? And what does Jesus say for the disciple to do in that case? What does He say for a disciple to do when someone begs from him (v42)? What does He say not to do, when someone asks to borrow?

How does a Christian respond to mistreatment? Matthew 5:38–42 prepares us for the morning sermon on the Lord's Day. In these five verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **Christians respond to mistreatment not in the fleshly resentment of the scribe but in the strength and freedom of resting upon Christ.**

This passage requires entrusting our honor, our rights, our liberty, and our prosperity to the Lord. It frees us to enjoy the strength and honor of belonging to Christ and serving Christ as His subjects.

Entrusting our honor to Christ, v38–39. Jesus continues to show how necessary it is for His subjects' righteousness to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. They had taken passages applying to the judicial system that God gave to the nation of Israel and used it to justify personal revenge. These laws actually prohibited personal revenge by putting retribution in the hands not of the individual but of the nation corporately. But the scribes' interpretation did not teach people to entrust themselves to God Who judges justly (cf. 1Pet 2:20–23). Instead, it reinforced the fleshly impulse for retaliation.

But Christ's subjects do not need to retaliate. They are actually blessed when abused (cf. v10–12), and now Jesus teaches them to add the blessedness of meekness. v39 refers to a backhand to the face, an even greater insult in their culture than in our own. But imagine the horror of the persecutor, when the Christian is completely unfazed by this. The insult and attack have failed to take his dignity or intimidate him. Here he is ready to receive another blow, just as steady as before. In a meekness that is sure of the greatness of Christ, and Christ being worth suffering any abuse, there is a strength that the world has no category for.

Entrusting our rights to Christ, v40. Men using the courts to steal from others is not new or unique to our culture. But if we are entrusting ourselves to the Lord, we needn't be resentful or bitter against such a wicked thief or abuser. We may be sure that God will execute justice, and this frees us to love our enemy (cf. v44–45). When Jesus tells us to give the cloak as well, He makes it plain that He is not prescribing specific procedure but addressing the attitude of the heart (or else this disciple would end up, literally, naked).

Jesus did not insist on His rights (cf. Php 2:6), and we are to have His same mind in us (cf. Php 2:5). Being sued by another threatens to stir up resentment. But if we hold loosely to our rights, if only we might glorify Christ, we will find it no great loss to endure injustice that is momentary and light by comparison.

Entrusting our liberty to Christ, v41. This verse addresses a peculiarity of life in the empire. A Roman soldier could require anyone to carry a burden for a thousand paces (this would later happen with Simon the Cyrene and the cross). In this hypothetical case, the soldier is surprised by this Christian who keeps going past a thousand, eleven hundred, twelve hundred. The Christian, rather than being offended at being forced to serve, surprises his captor by cheerful, extra service.

And it is in the extra service, in the second mile, that he has most opportunity to give an answer for the hope that is in him (cf. 1Pet 3:15). Christians are free in all circumstances, whatever the earthly oppression. For two millennia, masters and captors have discovered that it is impossible to take away the freedom of a heart that cheerfully serves Christ (cf. Eph 6:5–8). If we are robbed of earthly liberty, we need not be bitter of heart but rather enjoy that we continue to be free to serve our Kind in heaven.

Entrusting our prosperity to Christ, v42. It is difficult, in the prosperity of our culture, to conceive of a society in which almost everyone had to labor just to subsist. The slightest economic or health setback could put them into a hole they couldn't work out of. The poor depended on kindness, whether by giving or lending, but this kindness was unreliable. Having someone who gave you his attention, instead of turning away, was a rarity that would stir up hope (cf. Ac 3:4–5).

When a believer has an immediate occasion to help, he should not be wary of taking a financial hit but eager to seize the opportunity to give. The Lord, Who has blessed him to be able to do this, is able to supply all of our needs. We must live as those who are more attached to Him, and His goodness to us, and His glory in/through us, rather than as those who are attached to our possessions.

It is important to note that all of these instructions are for ourselves. For my brother's honor, or rights, or liberty, or prosperity, we ought to care and speak and act more than for our own. But this, too, comes not out of a retaliatory or bitter or selfish spirit, but out of love. And knowing the Lord's own love to us frees us, from self-interest, to love others.

How steady, and forgiving, and serving, and generous a believer ought to be! This was the point of the just society that God gave to Israel; and, enabling believers to be so is one of the great purposes of building a just society now. But even if our society is not just, yet under Christ, we may still be steady, and forgiving, and serving, and generous!

When have you been insulted? How may your dignity in Christ spare you from being intimidated or shaken by this? Who has infringed upon, or threatened to infringe upon, your rights? How does a readiness to lose even more free you from bitterness and enable you to love your enemy? In what situations have you been compelled into serving? What would it look like for you to serve extra? Whose true neediness has given you an opportunity to be generous?

Sample prayer: Lord, we thank You that You did not cling to Your grip upon equality with God but made yourself of no reputation and took the form of a slave. Grant that we would be humble and generous, knowing that our interests are safe in Your hands. For, we ask it through Your Name, Lord Jesus Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP15 "Within Your Tent, Who Will Reside?" or TPH488 "May the Mind of Christ, My Savior"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Matthew 5 38 through 42, these are God's words. You have heard that it was said an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But I've overlapped you on your right cheek. Turn the other to the maul.

If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, Bottom of your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him. Give to him, who asks of you And from him who wants to borrow from you, Do not turn away. So far the reading of gods inspired and And Aaron twerked.

Lord, Jesus is continuing to teach his disciples what it means. That the righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees in order for them to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, Yes, of course, that means that Jesus himself and his obedience. His sacrifice taking away our sin. He himself is our only right standing with God.

But this is not talking about, right standing, it is talking about right condition, what we must be made like In order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, And Jesus is showing that he himself. And his authority and his word. Establish for us. The righteousness to which we should strive.

And the righteousness that when he has finished his work in, He will have formed in. So that we will enter. And so we read and hear these things. Looking for the

correction to what comes from our flash looking for the correction, To what comes from false teaching that we might hear.

Even in the church. Just as this was originally correction to false teaching that they had heard. In. And so, he says, again, you have heard that it was set Any quotes from something that appears in Exodus and Leviticus and Deuteronomy. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Now, this was A judicial regulation. That described or taught that? The punishment ought to fit the crime. That especially for. Inflicting a penalty for harm. Done to another. The punishment ought to fit the crime. So that there would be Uh, clear and righteous Justice. In the judicial system that God gave to Israel.

And this clear and righteous judge Justice would Uh, any individual From. Taking revenge and ought to free him from feeling the need to take revenge. But, Even if he was not delivered internally, even if he did not take the heart, The point that God had made by putting. Retribution into the hands of the magistrate.

Even if he didn't take that to heart, he could at least see that he was not given the jurisdiction. Uh, to avenge himself. And so, they had taken. This. This principle that is taught several times. And they had actually turned it inside out. They had turned it upside down.

Uh, as a verse that Justified Revenge or Justified feeling vengeful. Just like, after the sermon tomorrow, we'll sing Psalm 109a. Which is a Psalm in, which the psalmist is talking about how he loves his enemies. But in return for his love, he receives hate and how his enemies. Accuse him and attack him verbally but in return for their accusing and attacking him, he's praying for them.

And he does leave hold of the justice of God. That the justice of God is full and fearful. And yet, the fact that God is the one who takes Vengeance, Enables him to love his enemies, just like the end of Romans, 12 teaches us. But there are some who take.

In Pregatory, Psalms curse, Psalms and teach that the presence of these Psalms in the Bible, Um, An opportunity for, and Justifies vindicates us to feel vengeful in our Spirits. It's okay for you to To think and feel vengeful and revengeful. Uh, against those who mistreat you look here in the Bible.

Uh, but it's exactly opposite, what those Psalms are teaching Just like these verses. Um, That the scribes had used to say, it's okay. You are perfectly uh Justified. It's perfectly legitimate to feel vengeful in your spirit to those who have injured, you Uh, that's exactly opposite. Uh, what Exod?

Uh, and Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Uh, we're teaching.

So, Jesus answers, but I tell you not to resist an evil person. That is not to retaliate against an evil person. But whoever slaps, you on your right cheek. Turn the other to him also. Hear the Lord Jesus is describing. Uh, not merely a physical attack, but something that is

That is even more. Attacking. And that is the insult of a backhand to the right cheek. Uh, different physical physical attacks. Um, the scribes had Uh, a catalog of The different values that you could require as penalty out of someone who had done something to you. And taking this back, end to the right cheek was actually quite high on the list.

Because it was not just, it was not physically harming so much. As it was insulting, insulting their honor. And one of the things that we see, Throughout this passage is a Jesus answers. The scribes. Um, Justifying. Uh, our being bitter and Revengeful. And, And hot with self-interest in our hearts.

He answers with exactly the opposite. He says. That we are to entrust our honor to God and trust or entrust our dignity. Uh, to God that we're to entrust our rights to him. That we are to entrust our Liberty to him, and that we are to entrust. Our prosperity to him.

And so the picture in verse 39 is someone who thinks he's really taking you down. Um, Taken away. Uh, your dignity and expects that. Uh, that you are quite humiliated but Uh, you are not embarrassed at all. Because you were already humble. You're already lowly before God, you have a dignity that belongs to him.

You're not trying to make everyone else recognize. How dignified you are? And so he's taken nothing from you. By the apparent insult, you are that Meek one, who inherits the earth. And in fact, when you get persecuted or, uh, or abused misused for Christ's sake, you are blessed and you are to Rejoice and be exceedingly.

Glad And so, here he is, he thinks he's delivered, the great insulting blow and you're completely unfazed. In fact, you've only got one cheek left, you've only got one. Uh, Uh, you've got 50 percent of the, your opportunity for being blessed in this way. And being identified as an heir of all the Earth, Uh, in this way.

Uh, and so you turn to him the other cheek. Uh, and how horrifying that would be. To the one who really thinks, he's Um, He was delivered. A great blow, and discovers that, he Uh, fairly well done. Nothing to you. And that he hasn't been able to take your dignity.

He hasn't been able to intimidate. You, there's actually great strength. And having a dignity that belongs to Christ, that is unassailable on Earth, and it truly 2000 years of the history of Gerson. Christian persecution has borne that out Many a persecutor has been frustrated and even afraid. When he has done things to Christians that he really thought would uh would bring them to their knees and make them turn from their faith.

And they were peaceful, even cheerful, even pleading with the persecutor to be saved from himself. From this horrible thing that he's doing to himself. And how surprising that has been and sometimes Sometimes even used by God to convert. The persecutor. And so, the Lord Jesus here isn't saying Uh, you can be a holy punching bag.

Uh, he is teaching the, the same thing that The law was teaching. That God has attached to Dignity to us that he himself will vindicate. And that we need not have a hot vindictive Spirit within ourselves. If we are entrusting ourselves to him, So we entrust our dignity or honor to Christ.

We also instruct our rights to Christ, it's going to be a very difficult text for anybody who has remaining flesh. That would be all of us on Earth. Uh, but especially in America How hardly has there ever been in the history of the world and entire people, all of whom insisted on their rights?

But in this case, Uh, he says, if anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, The idea here isn't that you've actually done something in which you owe him your tunic. Although in that case, the principal would also apply. This is a case in which your rights are being infringed upon.

Where he either is making a false case. Uh and just tricking the judge or the judges in cahoots with him, they're colluding together and they're going to take something away from you. Uh, and your rights are being trampled on. Well, you have. Rights with God. And, and he will avenge very similar principle.

To in verses, uh, to in verse 39. Uh, and he says, Uh, if in God's good Providence evil men are going to Evilly. Sinfully. Take away your right to this one thing. Then be prepared for the other. To occur. Let let him have your uh, your cloak as well if that happens.

And in this case, Um, Uh it's actually a situation that the tunic and the cloak would be all you had you would be left naked. And so, Uh we must read and understand how the Lord Jesus is teaching this as a correction. The idea the spirit. That was taught by the scribes and the Pharisees.

If we try and make this instead of a great lesson, in how we are to think and feel and respond. Uh, differently than scribes and Pharisees do, and we make it a very narrow small lesson about the particular thing to do in a specific situation. Uh, you would end up with Uh, people who actually strip themselves naked, whenever someone was going to sue them.

Um, that obviously is not what verse 40 is teaching. But what verse 40 is teaching. Is that we should not be so shaken. When the wicked of the world, combine with the imperfect and often wicked Justice System that we see in the world. To take away our rights. To take away that which is rightfully ours.

That then too. We entrust ourselves. Uh, to God who judges justly. And that we we don't cling tightly. Uh to what we have in this world, we have much greater rights. That will be perfectly maintained forever. Now it, we should. Be careful to notice that in each of these.

Situations in our passage, he's talking about, if something happens to you. We actually are to love our neighbor. As ourselves and even ahead of ourselves. This does not mean to be okay with someone taking away the Dignity of your neighbor or the rights of your neighbor Um, or the liberty of your neighbor or the prosperity of your neighbor, That there is actually a duty.

Uh, to love them and stand up for them and particularly. The neighbors in your own home. Uh, when a, when a man gets married and he takes his wife, as his nearest neighbor and his nearest sister, and then the Lord gives him. Uh, Sons and Daughters to be his nearest neighbors and brothers and as nearest neighbors and sisters.

He has a duty to them that is not out of Personal vindictiveness or personal Vengeance. But is out of love for neighbor. And yet, as Uh, as it touches us and particularly Uh, in cases where it's not something that we need. This attaches to something that we would need, you know, if he's taking your tunic and your cloak But if, uh, if you have a wife or a child, Who is struggling with a vindictive or, or Um, The spirit or husband shaken.

In an unnecessary. Way is not trusting in the Lord, they should both. See their husband and father. Uh, championing for them and yet Not as one who is desperate or in despair or anxious. But also teaching the wife teaching, the children leading, the wife and the children entrusting in the Lord and committing their case together to, to God.

Uh, not thinking that the husband or the father will be able in every case. Um, to vindicate dignity or right or Liberty, or or property. Uh, and so Uh, not putting in our set, not putting ourselves, or our dear ones in a place where we are uh, teaching them like the scribes, we're teaching the Jews.

So we entrust our honor to Christ or our dignity to Christ. In. Verse 39, we entrust Rights to Christ verse 40, we entrust our Liberty to Christ verse 41, whoever compels you This is forces You by Authority. To go one mile. Go with him too. Uh, now this is where we get the word mile from, although Um, Our mile is a little bit, uh, longer.

Uh, but under the Roman, uh, Empire Uh, one of the occupied peoples could be forced by a Roman soldier. To carry any burden, one thousand Paces. And so this is actually something that, uh, that they were familiar with Roman soldier. Hey, you Jew Uh, carry this, a thousand Paces and it probably wouldn't be something uh light either.

It'd be

An unpleasant thing. This is actually the the language in verse 41 is used with the Simon of Cyrene who is forced to carry Jesus's cross. Uh, for him under this law under this statute. Well, you can imagine that a Roman soldier is accustomed to these. Jews counting exactly to a thousand and as soon as they get to a thousand, they set the thing down and go.

But how hard would it be for them? They, they have impinged upon the liberty of one of these occupied people. And they get to 999 a thous. 1001 1002. 1135 1217. And this gives, Uh, this gives one of the opportunity for Uh, obeying First Peter 3 which says, um, To give an answer, be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within you.

Uh, if this was ever actually particularly obeyed, Uh, you could imagine the soldier at some point saying, Drew, why are you still carrying this? And answering. Wow, you gave me an opportunity to serve And my It's not like your king who Lords it over others. He came not to be served but to serve.

And to give his life as a ransom for many. So you are impinging upon my Liberty. In one way, but you're also giving me an opportunity to serve as my king does. And so I feel quite honored That I could be abused, like he was. Uh, the opportunity you might have and even if you don't have that opportunity to say it out loud, You still have the opportunity to feel it in your heart.

If Christians are like Christ, they are always looking around for opportunities to serve And if that opportunity comes by somebody who's really overreaching, As far as as their Authority goes. Then still, it comes in God's, good Providence to us and we would be glad To serve. Rather than always insisting upon our independence and upon our Liberty, Because that's a spirit that doesn't just Uh, lead to Misery.

Authority, that is overreached, but it's also a spirit that leads to violating the fifth commandment. You can see in your own life, how if you're always watching for an opportunity to serve and then Daddy asks you to do something your mommy asks you to do something. Uh, instead of saying why Instead you would jump up and you would do it and you would do it.

Right away and cheerfully and what's the one in the middle. All the way. Not just one mile but two miles. And your mom or your dad would see that. And because they are not like, the Roman soldier who doesn't know, Jesus, they would know. Aha. We're trying to be like their King.

Who came not to be served, but to serve And we thank God for the grace at work in your heart to do that. And so we're to entrust our dignity to Christ. We're going to trust our rights to Christ. We're to entrust our Liberty to Christ. We're to entrust our prosperity to Christ.

So, we're not only looking out for opportunities to serve verse 41. We would be looking for opportunities to be generous verse 42. This is the opposite of someone who is Is wary of and trying to avoid situations. In which they might take a financial hit. Because somebody else was needy.

Uh, now we are much removed. From uh, from several things already in this passage. But perhaps most of all. The situation in verse 42, where Uh, almost that entire Society. I had to work full time, just to survive. Um, it was subsistence. Uh, living what we now, call the poverty line is ordinary life for everyone, but a king Uh, everyone but a nobleman or royalty.

At the time. And so there would be many. Who having lived in that way would come to through some medical hardship or Some Financial setback, maybe a medical hardship for someone else in their family and how easily it could be brought to the place. Of borrowing, you're begging. And so, Uh, generally speaking, this is not describing people who would take advantage.

Although certainly there would have been in a society in which borrowing and begging were common. Uh, there would have been those who might take advantage and of course, the grumbling and stingy of heart would be continuously. Suspecting everyone of just trying to take advantage. But here, you're looking for the opportunity to be generous.

Like your savior give to him who asks you and from him who wants to borrow from you. Uh, do not turn away. Uh, which Uh, the beggar of course would be accustomed to and yet you have. Peter and John. Quite literally obeying this in Acts chapter 3, There's the man who's lame is paralytic is begging.

And, they tell him. Look at us. They don't turn away from him and he's accustomed to people turning away. And so he looks expectantly. He thinks they're going to give him something. And of course, command his healing in the Name of Christ because they don't have silver and gold.

To give to him. So they give to him what they have. Uh, and we Uh, may not always have with us. But we always have. The gospel. Uh, even if we have Uh, nothing. We can give financially. You know, we might be able to take the person's name, pray for them.

Uh, at that point.

Uh, or otherwise we can. Uh, we can give to them. Who ask? In our culture. Uh, we have wares abilities of giving. Uh, that are less harmful. It takes some wisdom. Uh, we don't want to harm the one. Who is asking from us? Particularly, because there are so many things to spend on now.

Uh, that people. Uh, do instead of instead of food and drinks. So again to be careful against making an obedience. As to a specific outward. Uh and not first and foremost, receiving. The instruction about the principle and then following through, it doesn't mean it's only principle. Uh, principles are Uh, not really principles without action.

Uh, but following through in a way that is consistent with the principle. And not just unthinkingly harming people in order to feel good about Uh, our action. Which also happens too. But here not to be closed. Fisted closed, hearted stingy of heart. But just like, Um, in verse 39.

Uh, willing to Uh, to suffer shame for Christ or in verse 40 willing, Uh, to give up our rights. Uh, or verse 41. Willing to looking for opportunities for service. Also, then verse 42 looking for opportunity for generosity Uh, and not watching out. Um, for occasions. Where we might, uh, Where we might lose something after all the Lord feeds us, the Lord gives us to drink the Lord close us.

As we're going to be hearing also in The Sermon on the Mount. And if just now he's given us opportunity to be generous with what he's given us. We must not live as or act as if the Lord's generosity with us, is done. And Uh, and we have to hold on tightly to, to what we have.

Uh, he who has given us what we have now and has given us opportunity to be generous. Uh, we'll continue to take care of us. Even if he brings us to a place, where we become someone, else's opportunity to be generous, but as in the other things, we must entrust our prosperity.

Also to Christ. You know, many of us. Say we do. We can part with these material things at any time. Well, so there's an easy way to prove that, that is to actually be generous to give Uh, when there's when there's genuine need so, let Uh, pray and ask the Lord that rather than our hearts being conformed to our original fleshliness, which definitely was what was shaping the way the scribes read the Bible.

That our hearts will be conformed instead to Christ. And we would read, and understand and respond to his word. The way that he teach. It's bro. Father, I pray that you would help me and my wife, my children, to have this steadiness and strength. And sweetness and service, and generosity of spirit.

That you teach us here by your son that he himself. Is a perfect example to us. Grant that. That we would read and understand your word rightly. As he teaches us to do, and, your spirit would use it to produce in. A reflection of his character. Since it is his word and your word by your spirit.

Work in us, according to that word as well. By your Same Spirit, we ask in Jesus name, amen.