


## A Christian's Response to Evil

### Introduction:

*“Do not resist an evil person.”*

I think these words are perhaps the MOST difficult of Jesus' to follow. This teaching seems to violate that huge sense of justice in all of us. *Hollywood knows to play this card well. As I wrote in the bulletin, most action films have the same PLOT-LINE: HORRIFIC INJUSTICE, AN INEPT PROTECTING INSTITUTION (POLICE, MILITARY OR GOVERNMENT) and THE NEED FOR A VIGILANTE HERO WHO HAS TO CROSS SEVERAL LINES TO SAVE THE DAY. Put a big name star in the mix, a bunch of action scenes and most of us are there. Why? Because, the cry for justice is as strong as food, success even sex. When evil raises its ugly head, we demand it be crushed no matter the cost. That is what the movies tell us. But that is NOT what Jesus tells us here.*

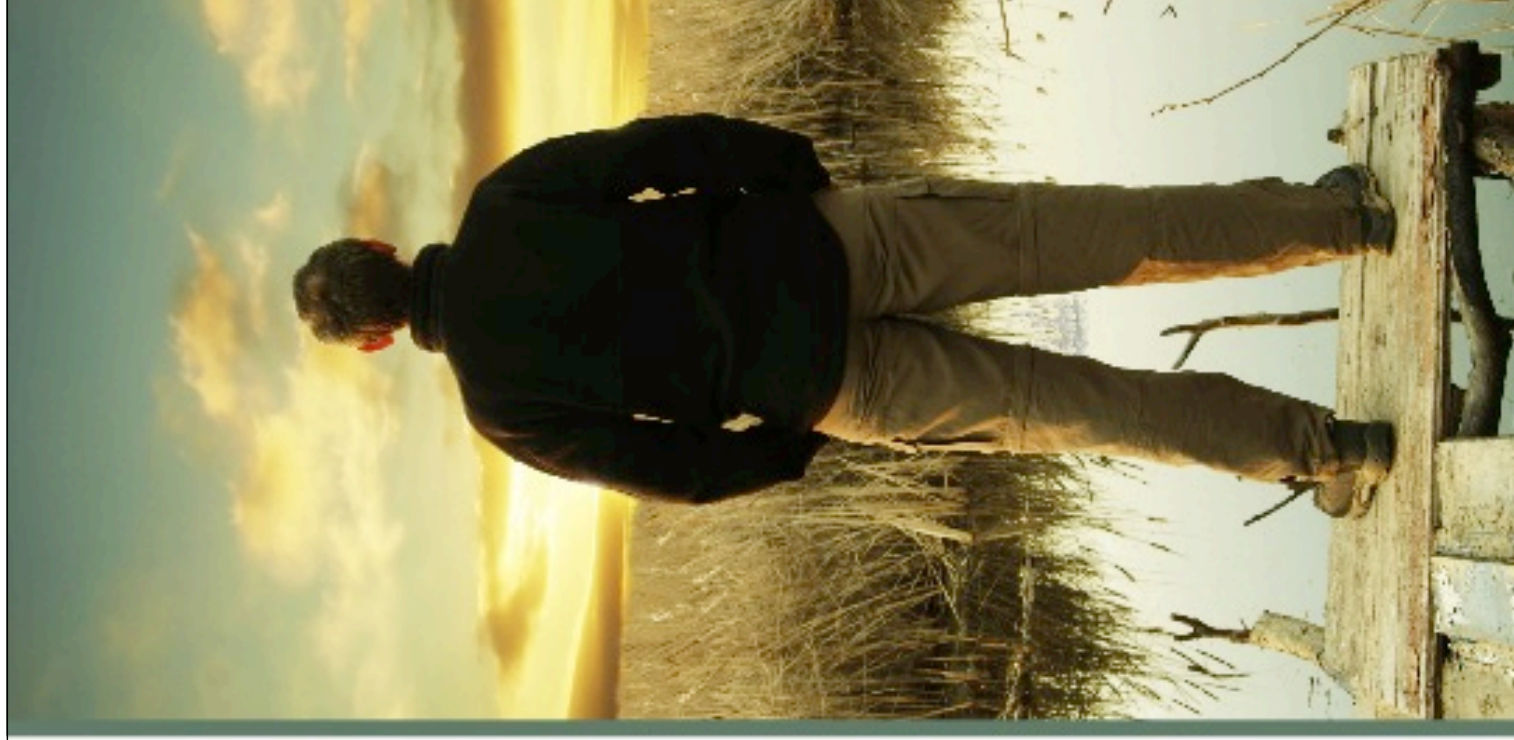
In one sense, I find some COMFORT the fact Jesus understands that encountering evil is a part of the human experience. Personally, I don't get Christians who naively think they will escape evil if they follow Christ. The world we live in has DARK PLACES and DARK MOMENTS. I know as parents we try to shield our kids from such situations. We hope that life for them that life for them will be forever “Disney”. In reality, though, evil finds its way into our lives and our homes. Lines are crossed. Words are exchanged. Rights are violated. Property broken. Occasionally, fists are thrown. *For the past 10 months, several of you have shared with me personally your agony, injustice, violation, anger and pain about the “evil” in this world. Jesus knows this is going to happen in our world. For that portion of this verse, I am glad.*

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a person's face, focusing on the right eye which is a striking blue color. The lighting is dramatic, with deep shadows and bright highlights, creating a somber and intense atmosphere. The person's expression is neutral but carries a sense of gravity.

***“Do not resist  
an evil person.”  
- Jesus***

# CHOOSE

the road less traveled  
studies in the sermon on the mount



condition  
(beatitudes)

influence / calling  
(salt and light)

relational righteousness  
(moral law)

behavior

desires

marriage

words

responses

**“YOU HAVE HEARD IT SAID.”**


**“TELL YOU.”**



# YOU HAVE HEARD...

that it was said,  
“Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.”

*lex talionis - principle of exact retribution*  
*(Deut. 19:21)*



For he (the governing authorities) is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, **for he does not bear the sword for nothing.** He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

- Romans 13:4

**BUT I TELL YOU...**

**Do not resist an evil person.**

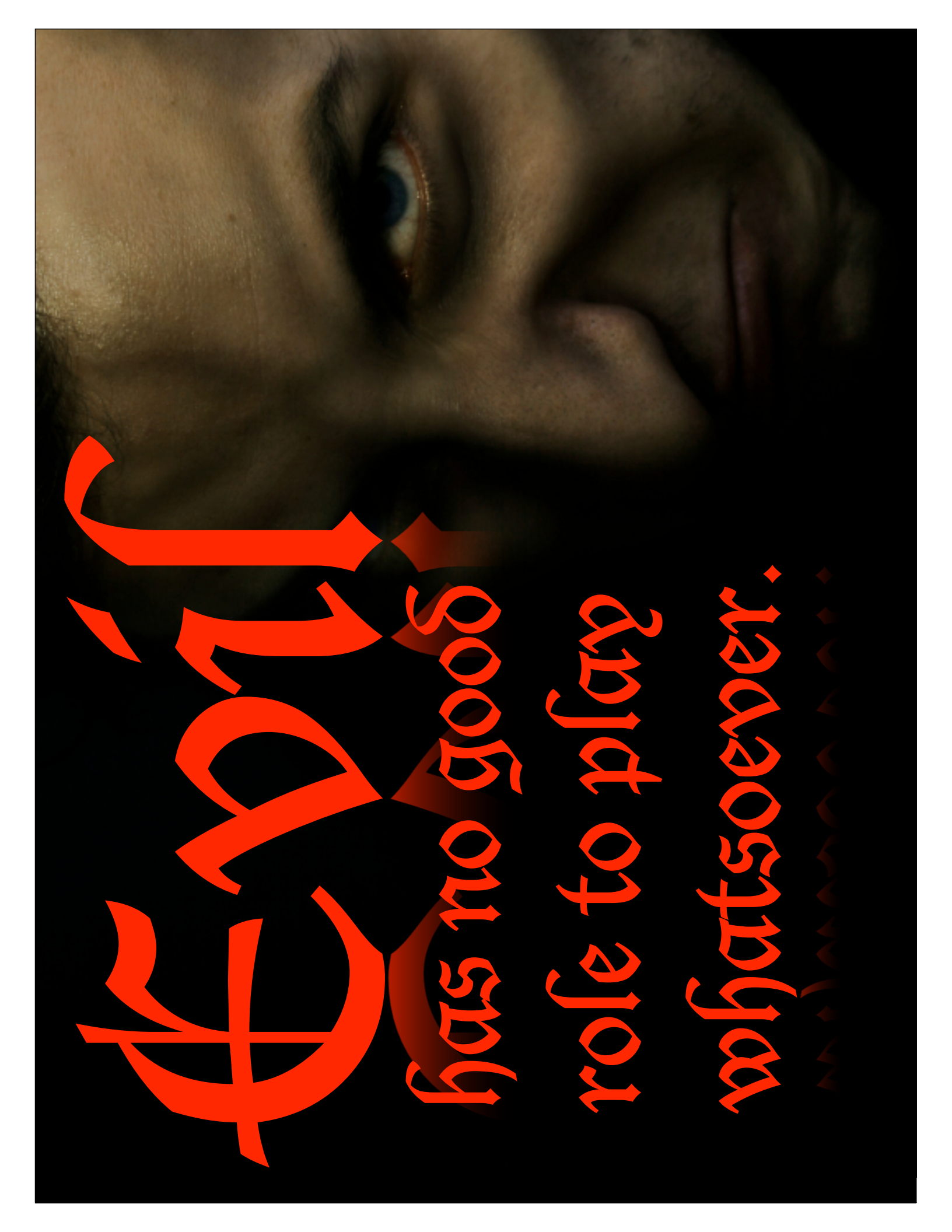


A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a person's face, focusing on the right eye which is a striking, unnatural red color. The rest of the face is in shadow, with the left eye closed. The skin appears pale and slightly textured.

Reality of  
**THE**

# God and Evil

1. Some abandon God.
2. Some say God can't do anything about it.
3. Some say "great virtues" must have "great vices".
4. Some look to the future.
5. Some deny evil.



**There**  
has no good  
role to play  
whatsoever.

***“How long,  
Sovereign Lord,  
holy and true,  
until you judge  
the inhabitants  
of the earth  
and avenge  
our blood?”***

***- Revelation 6:10***



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Response to

COVID-19



# Four Illustrations

**If** someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And **if** someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

**If** someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

**Give** to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. evil person.

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# What it means to forgive?

1. Forgo our right to strike back.
2. Replace feeling of resentment with good will.
3. Take concrete steps to restore the relationship.

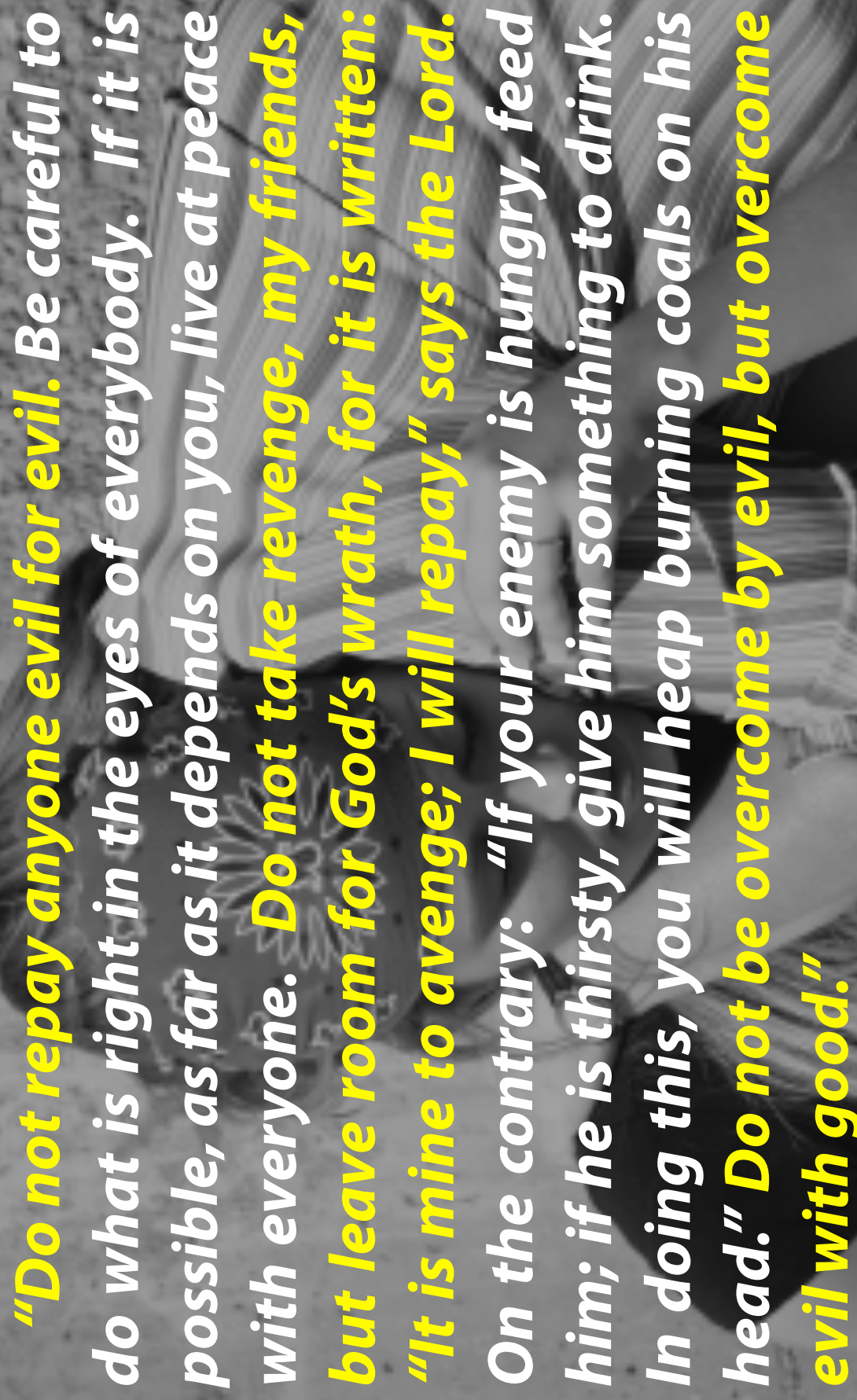
Revolutions over

THE



# What should we resist and NOT retaliate?

1. Exposes our soul to what is REALLY inside of us.
2. The world watches our responses and then decides whether our message is worth listening to.

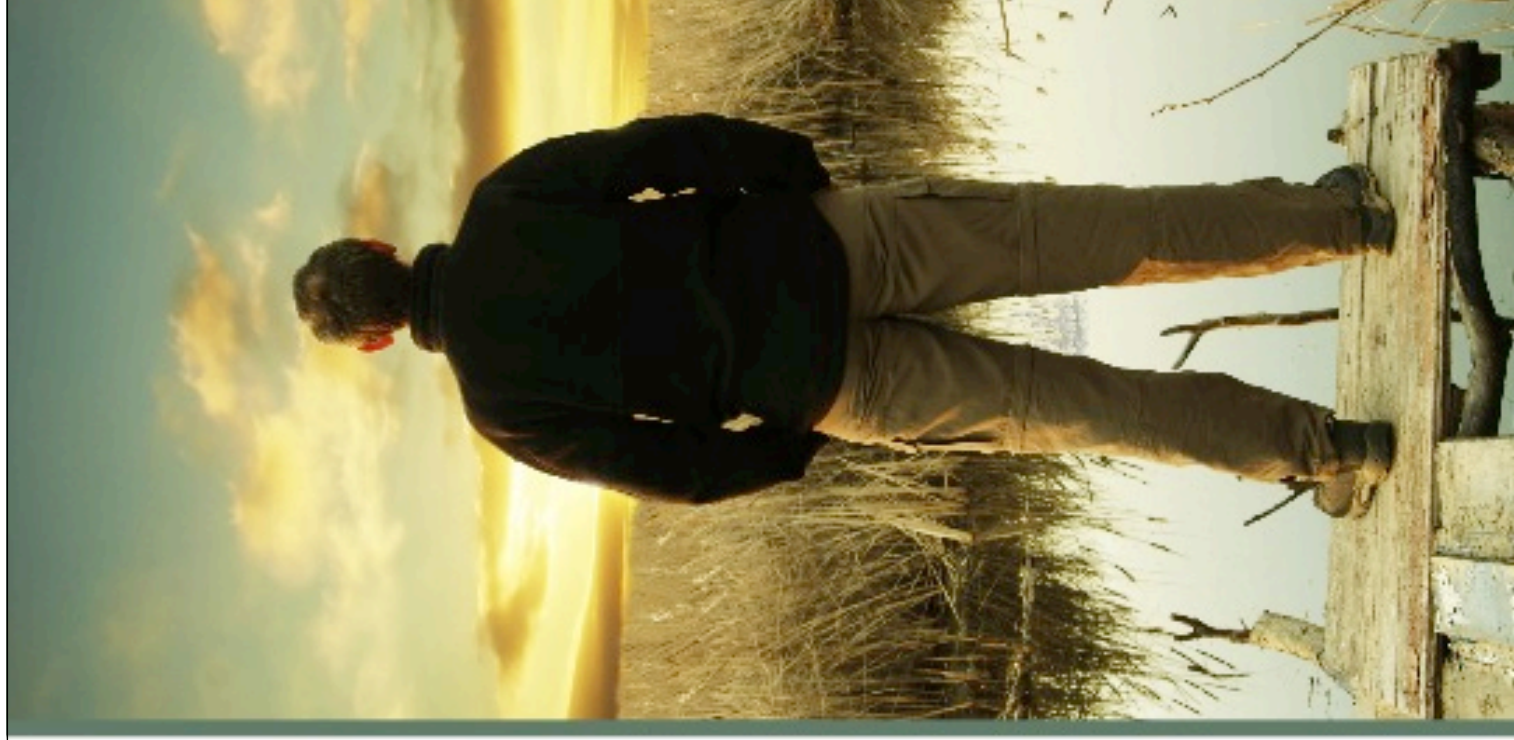


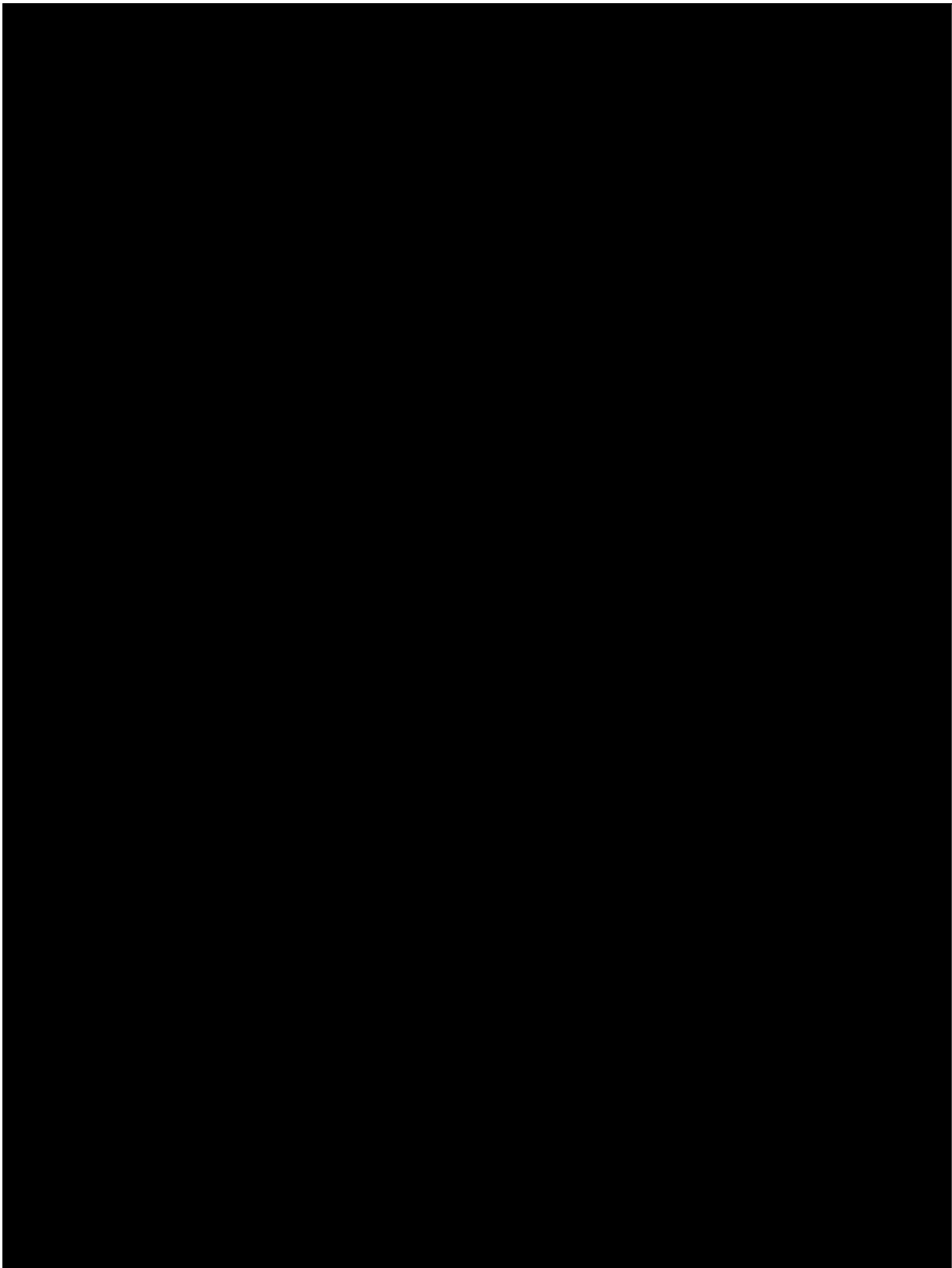
**“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”**

**- Romans 12:17-21**

# CHOOSE

the road less traveled  
studies in the sermon on the mount





On the other hand, it disturbs me how He tells us to **RESPOND** to evil. “Do not resist an evil person.” Let’s be honest, when tragic events occur (when your boss bad mouths you, when someone cuts you off on 580, when someone clips you on the playing field), our first reaction tends to be our worst. We have rights. We have been violated. Someone has crossed a line and they will have to pay back big time! And so we respond, often in anger and in hatred, occasionally with aggression. Other times, we react by shutting down and shutting out. We then replay in our mind the injustice as we experienced it. Yet, even though we all have these emotions, most of us sense in our heart that we probably shouldn’t act on them. A Gallup Poll found that 48 percent would “try to forgive”, 44 percent “plot to get even” and 8 percent actually “try to get even.” Revenge is an all too familiar taste for many of our palettes.

“Do not resist an evil person.” What does Jesus **MEAN** here? Sometimes, when I find a difficult phrase, I start digging in the original languages to see if means something other than what I am reading. “Resist” (ἀντιτάσσομαι) means “to oppose; to speak against; to get in ones face; to show hostility.” No help there. It still means what I am reading. “Do not resist an evil person.”

Now this brings up so many questions? 1) What about wars? 2) What about protecting my family? 3) What if someone crosses a line with me? 4) How does police fit into this? 5) What about injustice like slavery, abuse or torture and the like? Like all things, the key is to **DISCERN** from God’s Spirit how to apply the Biblical principle (that is the teachings of Jesus) to the specific situation.

Preview:

- 1) Reality of evil
- 2) Response to evil
- 3) Revolution over evil

**Tragedy is all to real human experience and unfortunately, to many times, our responses to people are far to human as well.**

Well, today we are going to talk about our **RESPONSES**. I must warn you that Jesus' words on **this topic are not just CHALLENGING, they are RADICAL**. And so, we will take up the task to see what standard He draws for us in the **area of our responses** and then we will reflect on how we measure up.

As always, we will start with the text and look first as the distortion of the Pharisees.

## **Distortion of the Pharisees:**

The Pharisees had an amazing gift of using the Bible to justify their actions, to excuse their acts of revenge, to vindicate themselves in the eyes of their enemies. Let's look again at the text in the Sermon of the Mount. Turn with me again to Matthew 5. As you do, I want to: 1) Review where we have been & 2) look at text structure.

<sup>38</sup>“*You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’*  
Matthew 5:38-39b

This is the principle of **exact retribution**, otherwise know as the *lex talionis*, comes right out Deuteronomy 19:17-18 where THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL ARE GIVEN SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION ARE HOW TO DEFINE JUSTICE AND RESTRAIN ACTS OF REVENGE. AND THAT'S WHAT IT WAS USED FOR TO DEFINE PROPER AND CLEAR LINES OF JUSTICE AND TO RESTRAIN NEEDLES ACTS OF REVENGE. It also PROHIBITED THE TAKING OF THE LAW INTO ONE'S OWN HAND TO LET LOOSE THE LEASH OF OUR OWN FURY AND RAGE (sorry Clint Eastwood and Charles Branson).

In fact, in Islamic law, the *lex talionis*, is the maximum punishment allowable and is still administered **literally** in Saudi Arabia today. **Now before you gross out on this concept, you should realize that even in OT law, there is evidence other penalties for crimes such as financial damages (Ex 21:26, 27) being used.** And it is almost certain that in Jesus' day, **literal retaliation** had been replaced by **FINANCIAL PENALTIES** or **PRISON TERMS**.

But there is another point I want you to see in this text and it is the **abuse Jesus is correcting in the Pharisees.** **THE PHARISEES WANTED TO EXTEND THIS PRINCIPLE OF JUST RETRIBUTION FROM THE LAW COURTS (WHERE IT BELONGS) TO**

**THE REALM OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (WHERE IT DOES NOT BELONG) (2X).** And so the law that was given to stem personal revenge is now being used for the very thing it was to abolish.

Two players: **“THE INSTITUTION”** and **“THE INDIVIDUAL”**. Regarding **THE INSTITUTION**, now we cannot take Jesus’ command, **“Resist not evil”** as an absolute prohibition of the use of all force (including the police, militia) unless we are prepared to say that the Bible contradicts itself and the apostles misunderstood Jesus. **For the New Testament teaches that the state is a divine institution, commissioned (through its executive office-bearers) both to punish the wrongdoer (i.e. to “resist one who is evil” to the point of making him bear the penalty of evil) and to reward those who do good (Romans 13:1ff).**

*Rom. 13:4 For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*

That does not mean any institution can do what they want. **The same state of Romans 13 is termed “the servant of God” is pictured in Revelation 13 as an ally of the devil.** The fact that the state has been instituted by God does not preserve it from abusing its power and becoming a tool of Satan.

That being said, we need godly people to enter into these arenas and add grace and mercy to justice. There are also others who experience injustice in a way and find that to protect others they find themselves in the judicial arena.

The difference the institution and the individual is its God’s given function. **The state has been empowered by God to punish the evildoer. The individual Christian as we will see does not repay evil for evil, but overcomes evil with good.**

To sum it up, Jesus was not prohibiting the administration of justice, but rather forbidding us to take the law into our hands.

## Reality of Evil:

<sup>38</sup>*“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ <sup>39</sup>But I tell you, **Do not resist an evil person.**”*

Matthew 5:38-39b

**“Do not resist an evil person.”** The face of evil is an all too familiar portrait in our day and age and each new tragic episode baffles our minds. *Who could have expected 15 year old **Andy Williams** would take a gun to Santana High School in Southern California and casually opened fire, fatally wounding two students and shooting 13 others before surrendering to authorities? Who can explain **Susan Smith** heartlessly drowning her two young children, supposedly to perpetrate an ill-fated love affair? Who can explain the animalistic cannibalism of **Jeffrey Dahmer**? Who can explain the cold hearted murder of their parents by **Lyle and Erik Menendez**? What can explain the brutal beating and killing of a two year old boy at the hands of a ten year old and a twelve year old in Liverpool, England. Who can explain the dreadful crimes against at least two teenage girls in St. Catherines, Ontario, when **Paul Bernardo** tortured, raped, and mutilated them while the sister of one of the victims watched and videotaped it for their later viewing pleasure? The list seems endless and sickening and each week our headlines are full of them. 9-11 forever demolished the utopian view that evil is not an issue in our world today. Tragedy is indeed an all too familiar human experience.*

Now Jesus does not deny the existence of evil in our world. He simply states the reality and then moves on. Yet, for many, we say, **“Hold on Jesus. Wait just a minute. Now that You have brought up the issue of evil, I have a few questions that I would like to ask you.”** Now the fact that both God and evil coexist in this

sphere we call the world creates a huge dilemma. It is called the **Problem of Evil** and it goes something like this. **If God is all powerful, if God is loving then how can evil be allowed to exist? Why does God allow disease and suffering when He has the power and moral right to remove it? Why doesn't God in His holiness act today? How can He restrain Himself?** There are many answers to these questions, let me list a view:

1) Some, like Job's wife, **ABANDON** the sentimental belief in a loving God because so much evil in this life conspires against it. They throw in the towel of faith.

2) Some concluded that God does exist. He just **CANNOT DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT** or that is to say that He has a **hard time keeping chaos** in check.

3) Some people say that **GREAT VIRTUES MUST HAVE GREAT VICES** (dualism or star wars pantheism). Must have "hate" to have "love." True virtues can only grow under severe provocation or testing. This line of thought is problematic because for some, testing does not bring virtue, but vice in their life.

4) Some **LOOK TO THE FUTURE**, when an exacting justice will work itself out in the universe. **Unfairness is a temporary condition**, they say. *The Hindu doctrine of Karma, which applies a mathematical precision to this belief, calculates it may take a soul 6,800,000 incarnations to realize perfect justice. At the end of all those incarnations, a person will have experienced exactly the amount of pain and pleasure that he or she deserves.*

5) Some **DENY EVIL ALTOGETHER** and say the world is fair. Put mind over matter, belief over reality, faith over fact. Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science) and unfortunately, some Pentecostal preachers.

After hearing all the alternatives, **IT IS BEST TO SEE THAT EVIL HAS NO GOOD ROLE TO PLAY WHATSOEVER (2X)**. Though God may work through tragic circumstances, He never creates evil or condones it. In fact, all throughout Scripture, He condemns it. **Evil was not an intrinsic part of creation**. It is an alien invasion to our world. Evil entered the world subsequent to human beings and evil will someday in the future be judged by God. **Yet, in this life, we never come to terms with it because it has no proper place in this world**. The problem of evil is not a problem of how evil will finally be resolved, but the DELAY of the final resolution and there is our dilemma. And so for many of us, we cry in a loud voice with the victims of injustice in the book of Revelation, *“How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?”* (Re 6:10). How long O God, until You lift Your finger and balance the scales of justice? How long do I have to endure the pangs of this fallen planet? How long Lord? How long?

Unfortunately, the Bible does not give a philosophical answer to the problem of evil. Rather, and please listen to this truth, **THE BIBLE PRIMARILY TELLS HOW TO LIVE IN THE CONTEXT OF EVIL IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES**. When asked why God allowed evil to live and reign on planet earth, Martin Luther, the great reformer, replied, **“Let us keep clear of these abstract questions and consider the will of God such as it has been revealed to us.”** And so rather than walking down a road which the Bible gives us not clear answers, **let us walk down the path where will find how we are to live under the cloud of evil in our world**. Or as Luther stated, **“Let us consider the will of God as it has been revealed to us.”**

Tragedy is indeed a common experience for all humans and we need wisdom on how to react, how to respond, how to live with evil and evil people.

## Response to Evil:

<sup>39</sup> But I tell you, **Do not resist an evil person.** If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup> And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup> If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Matthew 5:39-42

Four cameo's of life (certainly not an exhaustive list) where a person confronts someone who is in some sense "evil": **1) who seeks to do us injury, 2) who desire to prosecute us, 3) who commands (not requests) our service and 4) who begs us for money.** All of these have a very modern ring to them except for perhaps the third one. Under Roman law, the transportation of military baggage could be mandated at any moment. Imagine traveling on your way to work trying to make a deadline when you are told, not asked, to carry someone's back pack for at least a mile and perhaps in the opposite direction. **In each of the four situations, Jesus said, our Christian duty is so completely FORGO REVENGE that we even allow the "evil" person to double the injury, to have twice of what they are demanding, to give more than they are taking.**

Come on Jesus. You can't be serious. Do you have any idea what you are saying? Let me get this straight. You are saying that our duty to individuals who wrong us is **not retaliation, but the acceptance of injustice without revenge or redress.** After all, you call the person "evil." We at least see eye to eye on that. The natural thing is to retaliate. To take up the sword and let them have their due. You can't be serious Jesus. Get real. I want to get revenge. I have been violated and I want justice. I do have rights you know.

Sir Francis Bacon, write and poet in the early 1600's says this about revenge. "Revenge is a king of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought the law to weed it out...certainly, in taking revenge a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing over it, he is superior, for it is a prince's part to pardon. "A prince's part to pardon." Perhaps, if we are honest with ourselves, maybe we have been acting more like paupers and not princes, like rogues instead of righteous, like beasts instead of people of the beatitudes. And so we are called TO PARDON, TO EXCUSE, TO FORGIVE.

To FORGIVE someone involves THREE things:

FIRST, IT MEANS TO FOREGO THE RIGHT OF STRIKING BACK. One rejects the urge to repay gossip with gossip, blow for blow, cutting word for cutting word. We do not resist. We do not retaliate. As that great 19<sup>th</sup> century preacher, *Charles Spurgeon* says, "*We are to be as the anvil when bad men are the hammers.*"

SECOND, IT MEANS REPLACING THE FEELING OF RESENTMENT AND ANGER WITH GOOD WILL. Terry Inman calls this "responding in the opposite spirit." This is where Jesus distances Himself, and us, from any other teacher human ears have heard. Though most of us will never act on our dark emotions, that typically never means that we won't harbor them, feed them and entertain vengeful thoughts. Jesus tells us He wants to exchange them: ANGER for PEACE, HATE for LOVE, REVENGE for SERVICE. To give up your rights, your needs, your ambitions for the opportunity to return good toward someone who has brought you evil. Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls this, "visible participation in the cross." *No one knows this better than Martin Luther King Jr. If any man knew the meaning of suffering in our time, King knew.*

*House bombed; living day by day for 13 years under constant threats of death; maliciously accused of being a Communist; false accused of being insincere; stabbed by a member of his own race; slugged in a hotel lobby; jailed over 20 times; deeply hurt and betrayed by friends - and yet this man had no bitterness in his heart, no rancor in his soul, no revenge in his mind. He went up and down the country preaching non-violence and the redemptive power of love.*

**THIRD, IT MEANS THE FORGIVING PERSON TAKES CONCRETE STEPS TO RESTORE GOOD RELATIONS.** Lord, I don't want to have a friendship with this person. They bug me. They offend me. They drive me crazy. Don't you realize what your are asking. I just can't do it. I won't do it. And for some of us that is where we stand we Jesus. We love so much about Him and wish He wouldn't ruin a perfectly good relationship with an absurd request as this. Make friends with those who walk over us. Ridiculous. Yet we don't understand, our limited mind can not see, that Jesus sees that this attitude is a cancer which will eat at our soul.

**Tragedy is indeed a common experience for all humans. Response is divine.**

## Revolution over evil:

*There's a tense scene in Tom Clancy's novel **The Hunt for Red October**. The Soviets have just deployed their newest ballistic missile submarine, a typhoon-class sub called **The Red October**. Captain first rank Marko Ramius of the Soviet Navy (played by Sean Connery) is taking it on its inaugural mission, and he has a daring plan in mind: he and his leading officers have decided to defect. Fourteen days after Ramius launches from the Arctic waters of the Soviet Union, U.S. Naval officers and a CIA agent board the sub and are presented command of **The Red October**.*

*As the officers exchange information, they suddenly hear the whine of a torpedo. Another Soviet sub! The first torpedo misses. Then sonar picks up another one. As Soviet captain Ramius barks out orders, the U.S. naval officers are horrified. With only 6,000 yards separating the two subs, **Captain Ramius heads directly toward the torpedo!** "Increase speed," he growls. "We're already at 100 percent," comes the reply. "Then give me 110 percent." U.S. naval commander Bart Mancuso exclaims, **"He's heading right into the torpedo."** At 20 seconds from impact, Soviet Captain Ramius begins engaging in small talk with the CIA agent, Jack Ryan. It seems to make no sense. **The Captain has made an incomprehensible move.** Suddenly there is impact—but no explosion. CIA agent Jack Ryan looks around, stunned. **"What happened?"** he asks. U.S. naval commander Mancuso grins. Now it all makes sense. "Combat tactics," he replies. **"By turning into the torpedo, Captain Ramius closed the distance between the torpedo and our sub before the torpedo could arm itself."** What seemed senseless turned out to be brilliant.*

To trust God is to believe that what he does is brilliant, even though at the moment it makes no sense. Like returning good for evil. Why then, does Jesus ask us to live this way? Why should we not resist and retaliate when we have been insulted? Why shouldn't we take up the sword and give a person their due. Where is the genius in this plan? Let me give you two reasons:

First, nothing more exposes our soul, our heart, our self like confrontation and a slap. We all want to be holy, mature, more like Jesus. At least that is what we sing and pray about. Well, how does that happen? Is it an instantaneous transformation that occurs while you sit in the pew? Does it come after attending 1000 church services? Tell me how become more like Jesus. Well, typically, God's classroom is not found in the walls of a church, but in the market place. The world is His school and difficult people are purposely placed in our path to see how we respond. Though God does not create evil, He certainly uses it to forge in our life, the image of His Son. Like a hammer in the sculptors' hand, God uses, strenuous, if not impossible situations, to prune out our self and to bring about His righteous character in our lives. You cannot grow as a Christian without submitting to the hand of injustice and learn how to respond to it.

Second, because the world grows weary of another marketing scheme, another billboard, another flyer which tells them they must have this product or they must join this group. Driving down 880 is all but a blur for me. I don't even see the advertisements anymore when I go home to Fremont. Yet, one day, I saw a 3-D image of a computer out to me and it grabbed my attention enough to consider what product what trying to be sold to me. In the same way, the world has yet to see what

Christianity really looks like. They have heard our 4 spiritual laws and have heard our musical artists and watched our television preachers, but the true face of faith arise from the ashes of injustice. (cold shoulder, deny sex, stop talking)

**“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Ro 12:17-21)**

Where the world values would call for retribution and vengeance when evil is done to us, we are to respond in love and kindness. Why? Because when we respond to evil in radical form of goodness, we are in effect, heaping burning coals, or overcoming evil with good hoping that the perpetrator of evil will be brought to repentance.

**Tragedy is indeed a common experience for all humans. Response is divine.**

## **Conclusion:**

Email from Michael Porrazzo

Now go back and read the scriptures you gave me. They make so much sense! True freedom from offense comes only in the extension of grace and forgiveness, and never from extracting revenge or seeking to be made whole. We are at peace with God when we are peacemakers with one another, particularly with those who, for whatever reason, were our enemies. The extension of true grace often melts people. Not always. There really are some very evil people around. But the extension of the other cheek, the tunic, and going the extra mile, brings incredible results for the kingdom, glory to God, peace to ourselves, and dignity to others.