

## An Eye for an Eye—Mathew 5:38

### 38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’

This saying, “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” cuts to the \_\_\_\_\_ of fallen human nature. God’s law is \_\_\_\_\_, and needs no revision, but we tend to misapply it and mis-emphasize it, and that gets us into \_\_\_\_\_. God designed us with a sense of right and wrong, and with a sense of \_\_\_\_\_. People who live only by “their rights” and “getting what’s coming to them” are living by their \_\_\_\_\_ appetites (Rom 8:7-8). So, instead of justice, what we have instead is a \_\_\_\_\_ insistence on getting our due, and \_\_\_\_\_ against anyone that gets in our way (James 4:1-2) **What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is the source not your pleasures that wage war in your body’s parts? 2 You lust and do not have, so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.** The normal desire for justice is perverted into taking \_\_\_\_\_ and grasping and retaliation, and that’s why we have war.

The first time that we encounter the phrase “an eye for an eye” is amongst the ordinances for the Israelites found in Exodus 21:23-25. Remember that, in giving the Law to Israel, God had a three-fold task. First, God gave them a \_\_\_\_\_ law which taught them the difference between good and evil; what behaviors pleased God, and what behaviors were evil and displeasing to Him. The best \_\_\_\_\_ of this is the Ten Commandments. Second, God gave the Israelites \_\_\_\_\_ law—this described what worship and service to Him should look like. And, of course, in His perfect life and sacrificial death, Jesus fulfilled the \_\_\_\_\_ laws. In fact, the ceremonies, sacrifices, and other elements of the Old Covenant were “only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves” (Heb 10:1). We are justified \_\_\_\_\_ from the works of the law, but not in nullification of the law. When Paul describes this in Romans 3:21-22a saying **21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 but it is the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**. We are justified by the grace of God through faith in Jesus, but as Paul reminds us in Romans 3:31 **Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.** The law is established The law could only convict us of sin, but the law of grace sets us free. And this is why we don’t have to sacrifice animals at a Temple in Jerusalem. And so, we see that Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ the righteous requirements of the law, so that He could die for us, and set us \_\_\_\_\_ from those requirements. And it’s not a freedom to sin, or to walk according to the flesh, and do our own thing. It’s a freedom \_\_\_\_\_ to sin, and to walk the path that God has for us \_\_\_\_\_ of our own path. It’s requirements \_\_\_\_\_ the law, but along with those requirements come the power of the Holy Spirit to help us overcome sin in our walk with Christ. Now the third part of the law is what we call the \_\_\_\_\_ law. This was the law in the sense that we think of it in our society today. It is law meant to control all kinds of \_\_\_\_\_ and restrain anger and violence, and revenge. A slight injury or insult, and suddenly \_\_\_\_\_ is on the table. Retribution and retaliation are commonplace, and it is only law that attempts to keep them in check. It was to reduce the chaos and trouble of continual vengeance against each other that God gave these civil laws to put a \_\_\_\_\_ on sin. (Lev. 24:17-20). In the case of bodily injury, God sets the limit at \_\_\_\_\_ what injury was caused in the first place—no more. God forbids \_\_\_\_\_. The civil law was not given primarily to individual people, but to the \_\_\_\_\_. Just like the law is written today, it is to inform \_\_\_\_\_ what is considered right and wrong under the law, but when it comes to punishment, it’s instructions are to the \_\_\_\_\_, not to individuals.

Deut 19:18-21. In these words we see the charge to the judges to investigate thoroughly. It was their job to \_\_\_\_\_ what should be done. It removed the wronged person from the \_\_\_\_\_, because there's no way that the wronged person could make an unbiased decision regarding \_\_\_\_\_. It made sure that the facts of the case were established by an impartial, neutral party, and that punishments were also decided \_\_\_\_\_. We see the principle of \_\_\_\_\_ that by following these laws, evil amongst the people will be eliminated.

Now, the Pharisees took these instructions to the judges and twisted them, misapplying them to people's \_\_\_\_\_ lives. They changed legal restitution limited by God into a \_\_\_\_\_ to take personal revenge. And this attitude of having a \_\_\_\_\_ to revenge and even a moral obligation to revenge was what they were teaching the people, and so Jesus had to correct them.

And, this whole attitude of the letter of the law vs. God's true intention in giving the law is what this section of the Sermon on the Mount is about. The law was meant to help \_\_\_\_\_ with God and relationships with each other, but the Pharisees were turning it into a horrible burden for people, and even causing them to \_\_\_\_\_ because of their interpretation of the law. And so, when Jesus gives His correction, it's not to the Pharisees at all, but to His disciples; citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. He wasn't going to persuade the Pharisees to give up their moral posturing or their self-appointed role as Israel's spiritual leaders. But, He was going to give them something to \_\_\_\_\_ about as He instructed his disciples. He did let them know that they were falling \_\_\_\_\_ of the glory of God, and were not going to enter heaven based on their own perceived self-righteousness. And by doing this, he may have upset them and hurt their sensibilities, but a few of them saw the \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus' words and ended up as followers of Jesus, so in the end his unmasking their self-righteousness was the \_\_\_\_\_ thing He could do for them. He wasn't denying the limit that God had set in the Law, He tells us as His followers not to \_\_\_\_\_ on our right to take up our own cause and have our own retribution or revenge. And in so doing, He is going to set up a \_\_\_\_\_ between true followers of God, and the self-righteous Pharisees that will be plain for everyone to see. Jesus' followers are called to \_\_\_\_\_ the law.