

The Point (of Your Every Wound)

Matthew 5:38-48

The Living Law (no. 9 in the series)

April 19, 2020

Peter Hiett

Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/the-point-of-your-every-wound/>

Transcript document prepared by: Heather Eades (eades.heather@gmail.com)

This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!

Prayer

And so, Lord God, we pray that we would join the refrain right now, and that you would reign, Lord God— that love would reign. That free love—absolutely free love— and mercy would reign. And, Lord, would you do that through your Word? Speak your Word now, and talk into your Word; talk into You, Jesus. I just gotta say—man, you say some nutty stuff. Sometimes I just wonder if anyone believes it. And so God, if anyone does believe it, it's by the power of your Spirit. So, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, help us to preach. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Message

Several years ago, in Pasadena California near Fuller Seminary (where I was enrolled as a new student in the Master of Divinity Program), I stopped to get some lunch at a crowded chicken stand. I was waiting in line when this young, apparently underprivileged, minority youth came up to me and said, "*Man, I'm so hungry. Could you spare just a few bucks so I could get a piece of chicken?*"

I looked at him and thought, *I'm here to glorify God and change the world. And I should have compassion.* So, I smiled and loudly exclaimed, "*Sure!*" as I handed him some cash.

As soon as I had handed him the money, his expression changed entirely. He spun around, waved the money in the air, and yelled to his friends: "*Hey guys! I got the money!*" Then he and his buddies ran off laughing—and they didn't even buy any chicken!

Meanwhile, everyone in line gave me this look. And I knew what it meant:

You're an idiot... And what did your charity accomplish?

Now these boys are rewarded with booze and drugs, while they learn the value of lies... and that crime pays.

Even St. Paul, in 2nd Thessalonians 3:10 clearly states, 'If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.'

Couldn't you tell that that boy was not willing to work?

You're just a fool... and, what's the point?

I'm sure that's what they were thinking. I didn't hear them say it, but they were thinking it! And I just wanted to run and hide the wound that had just been inflicted upon my *psyche*. I wanted justice.

I wanted "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," I wanted five bucks for five bucks, plus a little interest to cover the pain and suffering to my ego. Except for the part about interest, that's the command of God in three separate places in the Old Testament: Exodus 21, Leviticus 24, and Deuteronomy 19. "Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

In Matthew 5:38, Jesus expounds the law in The Sermon on The Mount:

³⁸You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' ³⁹But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil [literally: "the evil"]. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Do you understand why Jesus got crucified? He presents us with several crises:

1. Who does Jesus think he is?

That's God who's talking in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. "*But I say to you,*" says Jesus.

2. How does he not abolish the Law, or at least a boatload of jots and tittles (iotas and dots)?

Remember? In Matthew 5:17, about one minute ago in this very same sermon he said, "Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

Does Jesus have amnesia? And even if he did, why would Matthew record these two statements in the very same chapter? And Jesus and Matthew must've thought both statements were true.

3. Doesn't Jesus give a flying turd about us, and injustice, and creating a better world? "Do not resist the one that is evil, turn the other cheek..." I mean, *What's the point?*

To be slapped on the cheek was the height of insult in Jesus' day. And Jesus says, "*Let them insult you some more.*" In that day, a normal peasant only owned one tunic and one cloak. The cloak was the only possession under Old Testament law to which every Jew had a right; Jesus is saying, "*Give up all your rights.*"

If someone sued you for your tunic, and then you handed them your cloak, you'd be standing buck-naked in a court of law before all those witnesses!

"And if," says Jesus, "someone forces you to walk a mile, go two." That was an everyday occurrence for the Jews, for Israel was an occupied country and it was the practice of Roman Soldiers to conscript Jews and make them carry their burdens for them.

These Roman captors were not "good" by any standard, and their occupation of Israel was "evil," and Jesus says, "Do not resist the evil."

I've been bombarded with stuff in the mail from Christian organizations begging me to support the military conquest and settlement of old Israel by Jews resisting the demands of the UN and their Arab neighbors. But Jesus, the King of the Jews, did not say, "*Turn another tank*"—but rather he said, "*Turn the other cheek.*"

If he came back, I think we'd just crucify him again... and maybe we do.

"If anyone begs from you, give. If anyone wants to borrow, don't turn away."

Doesn't Jesus realize that if you really did this, you'd lose everything and end up looking like Mother Teresa or St. Francis of Assisi? The way the Roman Catholic Church dealt with this problem was to divide Jesus' commands between "precepts" and "counsels," so that verses like these were only meant for "special orders": monks, nuns, and St. Francis/Mother Teresa-types seeking perfection.

Many Dispensationalists say that the Sermon on the Mount really isn't for *us* but for Messianic Israel, they say. And that Messianic Israel didn't really go for it, so then God decided to go with the whole "dying-on-the-cross" thing, they say. So, these verses don't apply to *us*, the Church... they say.

But then, these very same folks quote a bunch of Old Testament verses about blessing Israel— So, they bless the nation state of Israel with guns and tanks and blow off the Sermon on the Mount.

Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and most Protestant denominations said, and still do say, "These verses certainly do apply to us as individuals, but not as officers employed by a government agency." They point to Romans 12 and 13 where Paul talks about our individual duty to "never avenge ourselves," but then talks about the fact that government is a "servant of God" that "does not bear the sword in vain."

So, the Reformers argued that a soldier or police officer should not "turn the other cheek," because it's not their cheek to turn; they're acting on behalf of other people's cheeks. It is interesting that Jesus did not say, "*If someone slaps your daughter on the cheek, let him slap her on the other cheek.*" It's also interesting that Jesus made a whip and apparently chased money-changers out of the temple on his Father's behalf. (Does he have cheeks?)

So anyway, the Protestant Reformers would say, "Policemen and soldiers use force to save other people's cheeks, not their own cheeks." However, serious Protestant pacifists, like some of the Anabaptists, the Mennonites, and the Amish, would argue that if a madman is threatening your daughter with a gun, you shouldn't shoot the shooter with your gun, but rather you should trust the results of non-violence to our all-powerful God.

Perhaps the most respected commentary on the Sermon on the Mount in the last one hundred years is *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. When he published it in 1937 in Germany, Bonhoeffer was a pacifist. Commenting on these verses he writes, "This distinction between "person" and "office" is wholly alien to the teaching of Jesus."ⁱⁱ Bonhoeffer argues that you can't separate your person from your office. You always have some kind of office, (father, soldier, pastor, preacher, etc.), and you're always a person responsible to Jesus.

"Resistance merely creates further evil..." writes Bonhoeffer. "By... willingly renouncing self-defense, the Christian affirms his absolute adherence to Jesus and his freedom from the tyranny of his own ego. Suffering willingly endured is stronger than evil..."ⁱⁱⁱ

By 1942, having returned to Germany from New York, Bonhoeffer was having a very hard time holding to his convictions. And in 1984, at the chicken stand in Pasadena, CA, I was having a hard time holding to my convictions as well.

You really do have to wonder why Jesus wasn't a little clearer on some of these issues.

- Doesn't he think it matters?
- Doesn't he realize that if you never resisted the evil and always turned the other cheek, you'd end up looking like Mother Teresa or St. Francis?
- Or worse than that... you could get yourself crucified? ...And, what's the point of that?

—*“Do not resist the evil... turn the other cheek... give your cloak... go the extra mile... do not refuse the one who would borrow from you”*

Next verse:

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ [Actually, the Bible never says that; people say that] 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that [in order that, for this reason that] you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect [teleioi—“finished.” Teleio is the verb; Telos is the noun. ... Do you remember where Jesus was “finished?”] 48 You therefore must be perfect (teleioi—“finished”), as your heavenly Father is perfect (teleioi—“finished”).

What a statement!

Henri Nouwen used to tell a story of an old holy man who saw a scorpion floating helplessly in the water of the River Ganges:

The old man leaned out over the water, hanging to some roots, and tried to rescue the scorpion. As soon as he touched it, the scorpion stung him. Instinctively he withdrew his hand. A few seconds later, having regained his balance, he stretched himself out again. This time the scorpion stung him so badly that his hand became swollen and bloody. The old man's face contorted with pain. Just then, a passerby saw the old man stretched out over the roots struggling with the scorpion. He yelled, *“Old man! What's wrong with you? Only a fool would risk his life for the sake of an ugly, evil creature! Don't you know you could kill yourself trying to save that ungrateful scorpion?”*

The old man turned to the stranger and said calmly, *“My friend, just because it is the scorpion's nature to sting, that does not change my nature to save.”*

What is God's nature? God is _____? Love. And Jesus means “God is Salvation.” He is Love poured out. He is three persons and one substance; He is love. That's three individuals who constantly bleed life, one into the other. Jesus prayed, “Holy Father, may they be one as we are one.”^{iv}

God is love. And, “In this is love,” writes John, “not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son, (who is also himself) to be the propitiation—an atoning sacrifice, the pleasing offering—for our sin.”^v

On the Cross, God sacrifices for us; God bleeds for us, and so on the cross Love is made known; and where Love is made known is where God is made known. In the words of John: *Jesus exegetes God*; Jesus has “made him known.”^{vi}

Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God—our Father.^{vii}

So, do you want to be made in the image and likeness of God... or not?

The perfected image of God is “Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” to use Paul’s words.^{viii} The book of Hebrews says that he “learned obedience through what he suffered.”^{ix} So, when he cried, “*It is finished; it is perfected,*” “it” appears to include himself in God’s image—not that he himself had ever sinned, but that he himself was perfected by bleeding for you... as if his *wounds* are his perfection.

Do you remember what Jesus showed his disciples when he rose from the dead? Did he show them:

- A certificate proving that he was finished in the image of God?
- A diploma stating that he had graduated from the School of Love?
- Did he show them diamonds and gold from the throne of God?
- Did he show them his super-powers?

I suppose he did just by standing in their presence, but what he seemed to have cared about was something very different; his treasure was something else; his glory was something else.

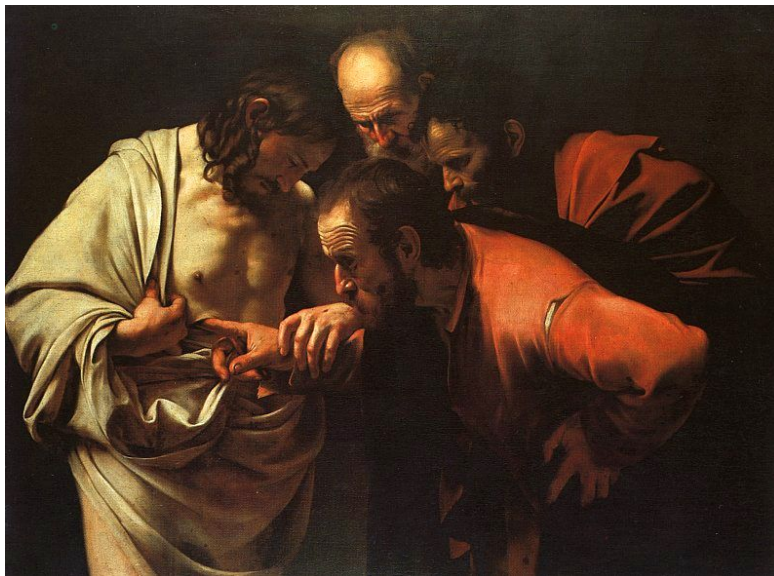


Figure 1 *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* by Carravagio (1603)

He showed them his wounds.

“Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of Christ,” writes Paul at the end of his letter to the Galatians. “Henceforth, let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks, the scars, the wounds of Jesus.”^x

You see, the scars on Paul’s body and the wounds to his *psyche* no longer meant shame but now, glory—the glory of God, alive in him. Five times he received the forty lashes less one. Each scar on his back no longer meant that he had failed to change the world. Each scar meant that he had become the image and likeness of God.

Jesus says, “*Do not resist the one who is evil... turn the other cheek... give them your cloak... go the extra mile as you carry their burden... love your enemies...*” Why? “So that, you can be sons of your father in heaven.” *Not* so that you can end poverty in your lifetime, build a big church, or make yourself proud of how generous you are. *But rather*, so that you can be sons and daughters of your Father in heaven. So that you can be finished in the image and likeness of God.

- Matthew 26:21 · Jesus does not resist the evil or evil ones. (v. 31)
- Matthew 26:67 · Jews slap Jesus across the cheek in the high priest’s courtyard.
- Matthew 27:35 · They take, and he gives—his tunic and his cloak. He’s stripped naked before all those witnesses.
- Matthew 27:31 · Roman soldiers make him bear our burden. He bears a cross more than a mile; he bears it into the depths of Hell.
And he did it, praying for those who persecuted him.
He cried, “it is finished—(*tetelesthai*, from *teleio*)” and delivered up his spirit.

Then, He rose from the dead and showed us his wounds.

So, do you want to be made in the image of God... or not?

See, maybe Sacrificial Love is not good for what it produces. But everything else is good for producing Sacrificial Love... in you.

Years ago, I felt profoundly wounded, for I spoke what I believe to be the truth, and I spoke it in what I thought was love. A friend, (whom I thought agreed with me but refused to stand with me), then asked me one day shortly after, “Was it worth it?”

I’ve struggled for years to articulate an answer, but I think this is the answer:
“No, it wasn’t *worth* it—it *was* It.”

The people in line at the chicken stand wanted to ask, “Was it worth it?”
“*You gave five bucks to feed a liar and wound your ego, was it worth it?*”
Well, no, maybe it wasn’t worth it—maybe it was “It.”

It was “It,” *if* I was truly wounded and surrendered that wound to Christ.

See, maybe your wounds are not valuable for what they produce, but rather everything else exists to produce those wounds. For every wound on your body is a wound on the body of Christ—and they only mean shame for as long as you hide them from him.

When you sin, you wound your God, yourself, and your neighbor. When you confess your sin, you give Christ your wounds, and in that place, you receive Mercy, believe Mercy, and bleed Mercy for others.

Your wounds of shame become his fountain of glory.

When someone sins against you, and you forgive them, your wounds are revealed as Christ's wounds, and you become the perfected image of God. Then every wound is a revelation of Love and an invitation *to* Love.

God is Love. Love is not good for something—Everything else exists for the revelation of Love, who is God and is the Good.

Love is not good for something— It's just Good. That's the Point.

Love is not good for something, and yet it creates and sustains everything. Love binds all things together.^{xi} And a body is bound together at the wounds. If you lose a finger, it will be bound back to the body at the wound where two members bleed, one into the other.

Never *use* Love for some other reason. But Love *is* the reason.

Love is the Reason, and he delights in using you... not because he has to, not because he needs to, but because he *wants* to. Love is happy, and he wants you to share his joy as he binds all things together.

The Word of Love just told us: *"Blessed, happy are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Of them [literally "of them"] is the kingdom of heaven." Blessed, happy, are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven—and remember heaven is constructed "of them"—so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Jesus just said, *"You have heard... 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'"* —That's often called the *Lex Talionis*—"law of retaliation"—and Jesus recites it from Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. And then he says, *"But I say to you, Do not retaliate, turn the other cheek."* And yet, he's already told us that he came to fulfill the law. He told us just about one minute ago in this very same sermon.

I think He wants us to ask: "How do you fulfill the law of retaliation?"

It's interesting that the *Lex Talionis* isn't included in the Ten Commandments, which were placed in the Ark of the Covenant. But it is included in the laws for the governance of the nation state of Israel.

I don't know of any parent that wants their child to live by the *Lex Talionis*... And yet, I don't know of any parent that doesn't employ the *Lex Talionis* in teaching their children how to live.

My daughter Elizabeth was wonderfully strong-willed as a child, and had a problem with biting. Once, when Susan bent over vacuuming, Elizabeth bit her so hard, she left teeth marks... bloody teeth marks in her bum, her backside, her bottom.

Our pediatrician said, “*Look Susan, you’ve got to bite her back. When bitten on one cheek, don’t turn the other cheek; Bite back.*” That’s the Lex Talionis.

Listen closely:

Susan didn’t need to bite Elizabeth to fulfill some abstract law called “justice.” But Elizabeth needed Susan to bite her, so she would come to know that when you bite your mom’s bum, you’re really biting your own bum; it will come back to bite you in your own bum (and that’s good); she needed to know the good, the “right,” what’s just.^{xii}

I’m happy to say that for almost thirty years now, neither Susan nor Elizabeth have bitten the other’s bum; both seem to be happy, and they like each other very much.

Even so, the “Lex Talionis” was a law in ancient Israelite courts, and I think Jesus claims to not abrogate it, but fulfill it: “life for life.” So *how* does he fulfill it?

You may remember that Jesus is “the Life,” the one and only life. So just by thinking that you have a right to life—your own life—you confess that you’ve stolen life and claimed it as your own.

As we’ve been preaching, humanity took the Life of the Good, who is God, on a tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden. And with every sin, we all take the Life of the Good in Flesh, who is God on a tree in a garden on Mt. Calvary. We take the Blood. The Life is in the blood.

The entire sacrificial system is a description of how that blood is to be returned to the tree, which is a throne. The Lex Talionis requires that we pay with our lives: Life for Life. And we all took the Life of Christ.

But the night before we took his life on the tree, Jesus gave his life at dinner saying, “*This is my body, this is my blood, given to you—fore-given to you.*” In the Revelation, we find that God gave his life in Christ Jesus from the foundation of the World. So, long before we could take his life, he gave his life; so the idea that we owe his life may just be an illusion of the human ego, which believes that it cannot be forgiven.

Perhaps we don’t “owe” the Life, and yet, to live is to surrender our lives. Jesus helps us return the Life to the tree in the garden—life for life.

Once we truly see that he’s fore-given his life, we will want to give our lives, and we’ll know that it’s not really even our lives that we’re giving, for he *is* the life, the one life, that is our life... he is human life, the Life of *ha adam*.^{xiii}

You’ll remember that David prayed, “Against you Lord, and you only, have I sinned.”^{xiv} When we take the life of another, we truly take life from Jesus, and Jesus is the Life that we take... and yet Jesus forgives his life on a tree in a garden.

That revelation will destroy your arrogant ego and create in you a new desire: to love as you’ve been loved, to give life as you constantly receive life.

So, if someone takes your life, you’ll know it’s Christ’s life and gladly give that life, thankful for the joy of being able to give life and confident that there is no shortage of life—there is an eternal river of life.^{xv}

Of course, that giving can be painful in this age, but it's an absolute banquet of Joy in the next. It's not death, but the death of death, which is eternal life.

Jesus is the Life that's given, and Jesus is the decision to give.

Jesus is the manifest judgment of God—He is the decision to Love.

He transforms the Lex Talionis from a description of hell into the reality that is the kingdom of God.

He is the judgment that transforms the law of retaliation into the way of Love.^{xvi}

He is the crises—*krisis* in Greek, translated “judgment.”

You can think of Hades or Hel—to use the old Norse terminology—as being right over here. [Peter points to the right of stage.] Picture seven billion self-centered, individual organisms or cells, all competing for life; that would be *Hel* (Hell), *Hades* or *Sheol*.

And now think of The Kingdom of Heaven, right over here. [Peter points to other side of stage.] Picture seven billion individual members or cells, not competing, but constantly communing, cooperating, and sacrificing one for another. That would be a Body... and the Body of Christ is the Kingdom of Heaven

And now, imagine if upon those 7 billion organisms in hell, we enforced this judgment— we imposed this decision to those in hell from the outside: “*You will bleed for your neighbor; you will Love.*” Well, that would be Hell for hell; that judgment would burn like fire; that would be what the Bible describes as “Gehenna.”

But now, what if we romanced that judgment into each organism, such that this decision became their decision, their free decision: “*You will bleed for your neighbor; you will lose your life and find it.*” Well, that would be Hell for hell as well; but the judgment wouldn't burn like fire, it would feel like life; that would be what the Bible calls “Salvation.”

Understand? When Love is only a law, it burns like Hell. But when Love is a Life that sits on the throne in the Sanctuary of your soul, He binds everything together and everyone experiences ecstasy.

You were born into this world to learn to love, in the very likeness of God. To Love is to freely choose to give Life to your neighbor. Every wound is an invitation to love. Every wound surrendered to Jesus is a door to eternal Life.

Jesus does not judge, yet his word and his wounds are the judgment.^{xvii} You must not judge, yet the wounds you bear in love are the judgment. Sacrificial Love is the Judgment of this world.

Sacrificial Love isn't good for something else. Sacrificial Love is everything that's Good. Is it worth it? No, it *is* It.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was arguably the most promising young theologian of the 20th century, mentored by the greatest theologian of the 20th century, Karl Barth. However, his theology—that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and that within his own body, Christ had torn down the dividing wall of hostility between God and humanity and between Jew and gentile and between each and every man.^{xviii} His theology was in direct opposition to the policies of the 3rd Reich.

As the Nazi threat grew, scholars in America arranged for his exile to the States and a teaching post in New York. No sooner had the boat docked in July of 1939, then Bonhoeffer knew he must return to Germany and suffer with his brothers.

Back in Germany, he was unable to maintain his pacifist convictions and became involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler. In April of 1943, he was arrested for assisting a group of Jews in an attempt to escape to Switzerland. In July of 1944, a hidden bomb, meant for Hitler exploded, without killing the Fuhrer. Bonhoeffer was implicated in the plot and sentenced to death.

Bonhoeffer failed as a pacifist, and he failed as a militant. However, in prison he loved his captors... his enemies. He pastored congregations of men wherever he was imprisoned, men that included some of his guards—who would apologize to him at night for having to lock his door. The guards smuggled his papers to the outside world. They are now a published classic, titled, *“Prisoner for God; letters and papers from prison.”*

On April 8, 1945, having just finished a prayer, the prison worship service was interrupted. Two men entered and said, *“Prisoner Bonhoeffer, come with us.”* Bonhoeffer whispered to a friend, *“This is the end. But for me, it is the beginning of life.”*

The next day, he was hanged in Flossenbug... just hours before the allies liberated the camp. It’s said that as he approached the gallows, he broke free from the guards and ran to the gallows, the tree on which he would hang, shouting a verse that he’d written in a poem weeks before, *“Oh death! You are the supreme festival on the road to freedom! Jesus, I’m coming home.”*^{xix}

Bonhoeffer failed as a pacifist and failed as a militant. But Jesus did not fail in making Dietrich Bonhoeffer into the very image and likeness of God.^{xx}

That’s “the Point.” Jesus is the Point. And he will not fail.

Who does he think he is? —The Word of God.

Communion

And so, at the end of the ages and the edge of eternity, Jesus took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you.”

And in the same manner he took the cup saying, “This is the covenant in my blood, drink of it all of you.”

This is the Point.

Let’s do this together; we’re joined at the wound.

Benediction

And so, Lord, we will sing a hallelujah; praise you! That, Jesus, you are God, and you said, ‘if you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.’ That means, Dad, it was You that was on that tree; that was your

heart. And even though it scares me, I think I would like to be like You. Thank you, Father, for sending our Lord Jesus, who is that very desire in our hearts. Thank You, that You want us to share in your joy. And the angels long to look into the gift that You have given us. Thank you, Dad, that you're Good. And you give me your life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

One particularly cold New England winter, John Winthrop was informed that a poor man had been stealing wood from his wood pile. The *Lex Talionis*, retributive justice, and Old Testament Law would require that this man pay back all of that wood. Our justice would be even more severe, demanding that the poor man pay back the wood with interest for pain and suffering.

John Winthrop found the man and said, "It's been an unusually hard winter, and I want to inform you that you may take as much wood from my wood pile as you desire." He would then brag to his friends, "In this way, I cured that man of stealing."^{xxi}

That's substantive and Biblical justice; and that's the fulfillment of the *Lex Talionis*—that's wood for wood *and* the revelation of Love.

So, Believe the Gospel. And, you will become the Gospel.
In fact, the Light will shine most brilliantly from your wounds. Amen.

Endnotes

ⁱ If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down,²⁷ for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate. --Exodus 22:26-27

ⁱⁱ Dietrich Bohoeffler, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (Macmillan, New York: 1949) p.123

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.* pp 122-123

^{iv} John 17:11

^v 1 John 4:10

^{vi} No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side (or "from the bosom of the Father" RSV), he has made him known (*exegesato*: "he exegetes him")

^{vii} Hebrews 1:2-4, 2 Cor. 4:4, Col. 1:15

^{viii} 1 Cor. 2:2

^{ix} Hebrews 5:8

^x But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

--Galatians 6:14-17 RSV

^{xi} Col. 3:14

^{xii} In New Testament Greek "just" and "right" are the same word. What is Just is what is Right. Justice is "Right-ness," or "righteousness," not retaliation.

xiii He is the Life of *ha adam* and the life of God. He is the "Son of God" and the "Son of man."

xiv Psalm 51:4

xv Yet it pleases him better that we should freely take his holy blood to wash away our sins; for there is no liquid created which he likes to give us so much, for it is so plentiful and it shares our nature.

- Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 13

xvi This is Leviticus 24: 17-22 in Strong's Literal Translation:

17 *'And when a man smiteth any soul of man, he is certainly put to death.*

18 *'And he who smiteth a beast repayeth it, body for body.*

19 *'And when a man putteth a blemish in his fellow, as he hath done so it is done to him;*

20 *breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he putteth a blemish in a man so it is done in him.*

21 *'And he who smiteth a beast repayeth it, and he who smiteth the life of man is put to death;*

22 *one judgment is to you; as a sojourner so is a native; for I am Jehovah your God.*

It's interesting how the more literal translation of the "imperfect" verbs in 17 and 19 changes the meaning--what I do to another I do to myself, I do to the one body, I do to the body of the *ha Adam*.

If the reality is enforced by law, it looks like a totalitarian dictatorship.

If it's the revelation of Love, it's rather different... "When one part suffers, all parts suffer..." "What you do to the least of these, you do to me," says Jesus.

I do not mean to imply that the original recipients of the Lex Talionis could've understood a different meaning than that that they did; I think Jesus is saying that he is the meaning—the hidden meaning, now revealed. Fulfilling "the law" or "the way" without the meaning is quite literally hell (Gehenna to be more precise); however fulfilling the way, or the law, with the meaning which is the judgment of God (love in flesh, that is Jesus), turns everything on its head. It's the difference between rape and making love on a honeymoon, the difference between being made to bleed and choosing to bleed, it's the difference between perceiving your neighbor as a separate and competing organism, and a member of your own body.

God has already given us all up to death and the illusion that we could fulfill the law in the power of our own flesh, he's given us up to "knowing evil." Jesus is the revelation that this "giving up" (Judgement ala Romans 1) is part of the process of "knowing the good," receiving life, and coming to choose Love in freedom. The Lex Talionis reveals that sin really is death, and Grace reveals that Love constantly fulfills the Lex Talionis--every eye that I take is Jesus' eye, and every eye is already forgiven, every eye is our eye, every life is "our life." It's my perception of being a separate and competing organism that makes the punishments of the Lex Talionis even a possibility. "Whatever you did to the least of these, you did to me" said Jesus... And if we did it to him, we will one day realize that we also did it to ourselves, for not only are Jesus and the Father One, but we are all one in the same way.

I'm not saying that the Israelites understood this, or that Moses or even Matthew understood this, but I do believe that Jesus means this--he actually is this, the head of "the Body."

This new perception utterly changes the way in which this law is fulfilled. It's why I think the statement of David in the Psalms is so important, "Against you and you only have I sinned." It's always the life of Jesus that is taken, and always the life of Jesus that is given. If someone takes my eye, they take the eye of Jesus. And if I give my eye, I'm giving the eye of Jesus. And if he/she re-gives, or for-gives the eye, everything is grace. "Father forgive them, they know not what they do" is the substantive justice that fulfills the Lex Talionis. An eye that I take, has been fore-given at the cross. Indeed, it was forgiven from the foundation of the world... and the Lex Talionis is a stage in the development of the human psyche.

It's like biting Elizabeth when she was two and wouldn't stop biting her brother. It was part of her coming to choose the good, which is the realization that she is her brother's keeper, that what she does to her brother she does to herself, and everything is grace. She is not a competing organism, but a member of the body of Love.

So I can assume.

1. That Scripture is inaccurate, and that Matthew wasn't aware of the inconsistencies in just one chapter of his Gospel. OR
2. That Scripture is accurate, and that Matthew was aware that Jesus was speaking a great mystery.

I do not know that my explanation or how Christ fulfills the Lex Talionis is correct, but I do know that I prefer assumption 2, over assumption 1.

^{xvii} John 8:15, 12:31-48. Jesus didn't judge but he is the Judgment. He's literally the Crises. The word Crises, comes from the Greek *krisis*, translated "judgment."

^{xviii} See 2 Cor. 5:19 and Eph. 2:14

^{xix} I heard this from Brennan Manning but haven't been able to confirm it with other sources. At our church retreat Manning shared that Bonhoeffer broke from his guard and ran to the gallows crying, "*Oh death! You are the supreme festival on the road to Christian freedom! Jesus, I'm coming home.*"

We do know that, Bonhoeffer did compose this poem a few months before his death:

*Come now thou greatest of feasts on the journey to freedom eternal;
death, cast aside all the burdensome chains, and demolish
the walls of our temporal body, the walls of our souls that are blinded,
so that at last we may see that which here remains hidden.
Freedom. How long we have sought the in discipline, action and suffering;
dying we now may behold the revealed in the Lord.*

A Nazi Prison Doctor who watched him die, would later write: "In the almost fifty years that I worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God."

--Eric Mataxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Thomas Nelson, Nashville: 2010) p.486, 532

^{xx} "One must completely abandon any attempt to make something of oneself, whether it be a saint, or a converted sinner, or a churchman (a so-called priestly type), a righteous man or and unrighteous one, a sick man or a healthy one. By... living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world— watching with Christ in Gethsemane. That, I think, is faith; that is *metanoia* (repentance); and that is how one becomes a man and a Christian (cf. Jer. 45!). How can success make us arrogant, or failure lead us astray, when we share in God's sufferings through a life of this kind?"

--Dietrich Bonhoeffer quoted in Eric Mataxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Thomas Nelson, Nashville: 2010) p. 484

^{xxi} In like manner, Winthrop saw justice as a matter more of substance than of procedure. Cotton Mather describes Winthrop's manner of governing as follows: "He was, indeed a governor who had most exactly studied that book which, pretending to teach politics, did only contain three leaves, and but one word in each of those leaves, which word was 'Moderation.'" When it was reported to him during an especially long and hard winter that a poor man in his neighborhood was stealing from his woodpile, Winthrop called the man into his presence and told him that because of the severity of the winter and his need, he had permission to supply himself from Winthrop's woodpile for the rest of the cold season. Thus, he said to his friends, did he effectively cure the man from stealing.

- Bellah, Madsen, et al, *Habits of the Heart*, p. 29.