

# Weaving the Word

## Slap Happy

Part 28 – March 29, 2015

Welcome to a place where we're trying to learn to turn the cheek and take the slap!

We listened in as Jesus taught His young apprentices to go the extra mile with the enemies of their faith and to love their persecutors; and, we noticed an *oddly specific* instruction.



**“If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”** – Matthew 5:39b NIV

We dug into the cultural context and found that the left hand brought shame on the *slapper* if used to strike another.

And, a **right handed blow on a right cheek describes an insulting, backhanded slap**. And, the ancient Jewish Mishnah (pictured left) assigns one of its highest fines (for a personal offense), to that right-handed, backhanded slap.



If your *right* cheek is backhanded, Jesus says, your *left* cheek shouldn't be left out! **We're not called to be door mats; but, we *are* called to boldly lay down our arms, and take a slap for the sake of Christ.**

So, what's it actually mean, to *us*, to *turn the other cheek*?

**It simply means that we surrender our “right” to retaliate.**

**Why do we reflexively strike back when even *slightly mistreated*?**



**“Inadvertently shine your high-beams at *me*, will ya! Well, I'll teach *you* for that completely understandable, unintentional oversight (*that I myself have done*)!”**

**[FLASH-FLASH-FLASH]**

**“Take that, you idiot!”**

**We must fight back the urge to fight back.**

**[The Apostle Paul writes]** Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. – Romans 12:17 NIV

**“That's what I was doing with the high beams: *right in the eyes!*”**

There are two ways we can repay 'em, "right in the eyes" ...



1. **We can repay 'em with mercy.**

But, some mistreatment is too major to appropriately overlook. And, in that case ...

2. **We can repay 'em with justice.**

**We're wired to desire perfect justice.**

Thankfully, **God is perfectly merciful and perfectly justful.**

*That should totally be a word.*



[Paul goes on to say] If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. – Romans 12:18 NIV

**Even if you go the extra mile, peace won't always be possible.**

Which is why Paul says, "as far as it depends on you".

**But, even when peace isn't possible, forgiveness isn't optional.**

And by *forgiveness* I don't mean that we dismiss or condone or forget the offense; I simply mean **we give up our desire to get even.**

[Paul further goes on to say] 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. – Romans 12:19 NIV

**Who would you rather have as your avenger; yourself or God?**

"I know the answer is *supposed to be God*, but the evidence sure seems to point toward *me!* Gossip, slander, insults, poison, guns (*poison-guns*) knives ... brake lines ... *so many tools to choose from!*"



**Why is it okay for God to repay, but not for me?**

Well, because **my goal is retaliation.**

And, **God's goal is reconciliation.**

**When scripture speaks of God's wrath, it's not psychoanalyzing Him, or defining His disposition; it's warning those who embrace the darkness of the consequence of Light.**

**God's wrath doesn't come at the whim of an angry tyrant.**

God's wrath comes as the inevitable outcome of rebellion against the light of truth.



Light eliminates darkness with perfect impartiality.

So to, God eliminates evil, not only with perfect impartiality, but with unconditional love for those who impose *themselves* to His wrath. I love this saying: God's wrath is simply God's goodness as experienced by evil.



Like finding a thug, abusing a child, in a dark alley; if it takes a 2x4 to the head to stop him, *that's* what goodness does. From the child's perspective that 2x4 was a wholly welcome sight! From the thug's perspective it was an *unpleasant surprise!*

Same 2x4 as experienced by innocence and evil.

God is the ultimate good, the ultimate truth, and the ultimate treasure; and, every unjust act will be judged in *that* light.

God's wrath is an expression of God's goodness. **My wrath is an expression of my goodness ... but, all contaminated with my selfishness, sinfulness, and short-sightedness.**

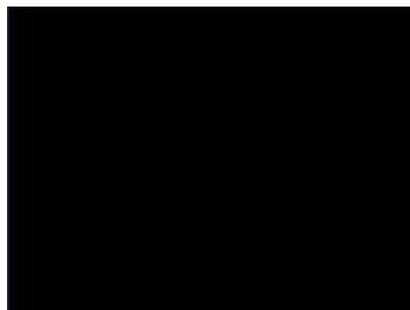
I've never told you about a knife fight I started in school.

There was a bully. It was recess. I found a rusty steak knife in the schoolyard. I told my buddy, Ricky, how I was going to threaten this guy. Scare him. *Maybe* take a couple jabs.

Ricky was all for it. Ricky was a bad influence.

I turned; took two steps; the school duty, Mrs. Crawford, suddenly appeared and said, "What'cha got there?" I *immediately* handed it over.

That was the extent of my one knife fight.



Roosevelt grade school. 1967. Mrs. Zediker's class. Kindergarten. Look at this close up on *me*. Angel or Devil?

The answer, of course, is: *both*.

**From the time we're two we learn to *strike back*.**

So, from the time we're reborn we must relearn to *hold back*.

**Which requires intentional, purposeful, *non-action*.**

Which is why Paul says to *deliberately* "leave room for God's wrath".



Which requires letting go of our grudges. *Kind of; I don't hold a grudge, the grudge holds me! We have to let the grudge let go.*

And if it won't let go, you have to give it, over and over again, to the only One who can loosen the grip of its cold, steely, fingers.

Which requires trusting that His perfect justice *will* prevail.

Which is quite difficult; because, we fear that letting go of a grudge, is like letting go of justice.

**Our struggle with a grudge is a battle with unbelief.**

We tend to view Paul's instructions as *taking* something *from* us.

“It is **mine** to avenge; **I** will repay,’ says the Lord”

But look closely; it's actually an *incredible promise* and a *gift!*

**It's our guarantee from God that perfect justice *will* prevail.**

“It is mine to **avenge**; **I will** repay,’ says the Lord”

**So, we can relax, rest, release the grudge, and find relief.**

**Or, we can doubt the Judge and keep the grudge.**



Which will it be?

**Turn the cheek. Take the slap.**

**Fight the urge. Hold back.**

**Surrender the grudge.**

**Trust the judge.**

**Every sin is called to account, either in hell or on the hill.**

**He's so devoted to justice, He offers to pay the penalty *Himself!***

**And, there's the difference between *my* wrath and His.**