

An Eye for an Eye

by Vic Zarley

Deuteronomy 19:15-21 gives some rules that were revered and enforced in ancient Israel. Here are those verses:

15 One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. 16 If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse a man of a crime, 17 the two men involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. 18 The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against his brother, 19 then do to him as he intended to do to his brother. You must purge the evil from among you. 20 The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you. 21 Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (NIV)

Have you seen any indication that verse 20 is still true today? Maybe in the ancient past people may have been frightened by the prospect that they would have done to them what they did to others, but today, with a seeming increase in hardened hearts, criminals seem to casually walk through the justice system, with little remorse. Does this leave a message for those on this same path, to correct their ways? Will the ideal mentioned in verse 20, ever come to pass? Will "the rest of the people hear of this and be afraid"? Does it look as if "never again will such an evil thing be done among us"? No, evil has been among us consistently even since the laws mentioned in Deuteronomy were enforced. Daily we read of increasing hatred and more hardened hearts as criminals do their wicked deeds with what appears as no conscience whatsoever.

I don't know how successful this was back in the ancient times, but the promise given in Deuteronomy 19 that claims we can "purge the evil from among us" by doing the same thing back to the criminal,

appears to have not really worked (or, at least, is failing today.) However, if we look at Deuteronomy 19 differently, the advice given by God in ancient times does work today. We need to think of ourselves, individually, as a tribe or city in which the evil must be purged. Did you know that people often show us our deeply embedded sins by their behavior toward us? How, you ask, is this possible? We are so blind to our own infestations, it actually takes



someone else to show us what is going on deep within us. When we are upset and want to do to others what they've done to us (because of our anger festering within), we are as much in need of healing, through Christ Jesus, as they are. This is why Jesus reverses the law of Moses by asking us to love and forgive others instead of do to them what they did to us. Jesus knows that He is the fulfillment of Moses' laws and He wants us to experience God's forgiveness of OUR sins. Jesus knows that this is accomplished only through Him, as we humbly turn all wrath we would bestow on others, over to Him so that He can dissipate it, bringing forgiveness and healing on the deepest level to the forgiver (us) and, hopefully, the forgiven (them). The prophet and Savior for today, Jesus, gives instruction that will assist us in the purging of evil from our defiled hearts. Here is what Jesus said as recorded in Matthew:

Mat 5:38 You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

Mat 5:39 But I say to you, Do not resist evil. But whoever shall strike you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

Mat 5:40 And to him desiring to sue you, and to take away your tunic, let him have your coat also.

Mat 5:41 And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two.

Mat 5:42 Give to him who asks of you, and you shall not turn away from him who would borrow from you.

Mat 5:43 You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy."

Mat 5:44 But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

Mat 5:45 so that you may become sons of your Father in Heaven. For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (MKJV)

I really appreciate thinking about the difference in Moses' law in the Old Testament and Jesus' expansion of the law in the New Testament. The Old Testament becomes more relevant (with regard to Jesus' interpretation of it in the New Testament), if you think of the city or tribe as an individual rather than a whole city or tribe made up of individuals. For instance, if we have within us infestations that go against the laws of God, upon recognition of these deeply ingrained thought patterns (usually brought out of us by other people), we should "kill them" or "stone them." We need to give them up immediately in order to purge ourselves of thoughts that will spread, infesting our whole individual walk with Christ and, maybe, even to the Body of Christ, if it is allowed to linger, mingling with our other thoughts.

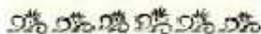
Jesus said to go against the grain of humanity's obsession to return evil for evil. He didn't say to ignore those who do evil to us (which would be the next step down from an attitude of vengefulness) but He said to actually love them. "For Heaven's sake," we complain. "How can He ask us to do such an abhorrent deed? Love them? How?"

Being a Christian is not an easy task. It is not easy precisely because we aren't that much involved in the process. It is most difficult for us to ease off on our obsession to be in charge in all of our affairs. All

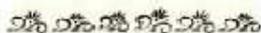
Christ asks of us is that we submit our lives totally to Him, our Lord and Savior, and allow Him to make the changes within us and in our lives. We are not expected to be wizards or magicians, able to make a potion to drink or shout "abracadabra" and, voila, instantly be able to love the unlovable. What is so difficult to remember is that we are not in charge of our "growth," we are only in charge of when we are going to allow Him to change us from the inside out. If we have a prideful heart, and insist on doing it ourselves, we are going to desecrate the process and feel a sense of failure brought on by our inability to reach our goal of loving those who don't appear to deserve our love. Our humble heart is the only way to be successful for it is the humble heart, in Christ, that, through Him, is able to accomplish the impossible.

We've got to let Christ take our burdens and trust Him to heal ANY circumstances we may find ourselves in. If we lack the understanding that with God all things are possible, we could easily detour onto a fruitless road of trying to handle everything ourselves. In addition, if we think that with God, all things are possible, but use this knowledge for self gain, we will find ourselves caught up in worthless goals toward worldly gain which, though possible with God, they are far from satisfying. The key here is in focusing on God's goals, which are stated quite clearly in the Bible, and know, beyond a doubt that with God these goals can be accomplished. Then we unleash the almighty power of our living God toward His clearly stated goals. Do not make the mistake in thinking God won't reward you for following Moses' upgraded precepts and laws (now stated by Jesus Christ.) He will reward you abundantly and He will give you signs NOW that you are a true lover of His Son, Jesus Christ, who said, "If you love me, follow my commands." No longer do we seek vengeance against those who have mistreated us, but, with complete submission to Christ, we now offer love. The "eye for an eye" mentality of old must be transformed into an outpouring of Christ's love, untold, which we gladly give to this hurting world.

Take the first step, if you haven't already done so, and humbly pray for the Lord to take your sins away and allow Him residence in your heart. Realize that Jesus died on the cross for you and make Him your most valuable treasure here on earth, as you eagerly follow His commands to love those who are the hardest to love.



Lord, grant me vision beyond the ancient law of "eye for eye and tooth for tooth." Give me a heart like Jesus' who told us to love one another as ourselves and to even go so far as to love our enemies and pray for them. This seems impossible to me, Lord. But, if you will, do that through me. Lord, I am a sinner who needs to be saved. Get me out of my arrogance that, with a few tweaks, here and there, I can do this myself. Lord, help me. I need what you did on the cross for me and I need it now. You are my salvation, Lord. Come into my heart and be my Lord and Savior!



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Thank you, and God bless you.
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