

# Matthew 5:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

## Analysis

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The lex talionis (law of retaliation) was a just principle limiting vengeance to proportional response—only an eye for an eye, not escalating violence. But Jesus calls His followers to go beyond justice to grace, beyond fair treatment to sacrificial love, beyond rights to mercy.

## Historical Context

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The 'eye for eye' law (Exodus 21:24) was actually a limitation on vengeance in ancient cultures where family feuds escalated endlessly. It established proportional justice. But Jesus calls His disciples to transcend even just retaliation, choosing to absorb evil rather than return it.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does insisting on your rights prevent you from showing Christ-like grace?

2. When has someone's willingness to absorb wrong rather than retaliate impacted you powerfully?

## Interlinear Text

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Ἐκούσατε ὅτι ἐρέθη, ὁφθαλμοῦ ἀντὶ ὁφθαλμοῦ καὶ  
Ye have heard that it hath been said An eye for An eye and  
G191 G3754 G4483 G3788 G473 G3788 G2532

οδόντος ἀντὶ οδόντος  
a tooth for a tooth  
G3599 G473 G3599

## Additional Cross-References

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**Deuteronomy 19:21** (Parallel theme): And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

**Deuteronomy 19:19** (Parallel theme): Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.

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