

# Matthew 5:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

## Analysis

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Non-retaliation against evil doesn't mean passivity toward evil itself, but refusing to respond to personal wrongs with revenge. The struck cheek represents insult and humiliation (a backhanded slap). Turning the other cheek shows meekness, dignity, and refusal to be controlled by others' evil actions.

## Historical Context

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A backhand slap with the right hand on the right cheek was an insulting blow to social inferiors in that culture. To turn the other cheek forces the aggressor either to stop or escalate to a full blow—either way exposing their wrongdoing while the victim maintains moral high ground.

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

## Study Questions

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1. How do you typically respond to insults or disrespect—with retaliation or with dignified non-retaliation?
2. What's the difference between biblical meekness and worldly weakness or passivity?

## Interlinear Text

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ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν μὴ ἀντιστῆναι τῷ πονηρῷ· ἀλλ'  
I But say unto you not That ye resist G3588 evil but  
G1473 G1161 G3004 G5213 G3361 G436 G4190 G235

ὅστις σε ῥαπίσει ἐπὶ τὴν δεξιάν σου σιαγόνα  
whosoever thee shall smite on right thy cheek  
G3748 G4571 G4474 G1909 G1188 G4675 G4600

στρέψοι αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν ἄλλην·  
turn to him also the other  
G4762 G846 G2532 G3588 G243

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 Thessalonians 5:15** (Evil): See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

**1 Peter 3:9** (Evil): Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

**Proverbs 20:22** (Evil): Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

**Lamentations 3:30** (Parallel theme): He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach.

**Leviticus 19:18** (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

**Proverbs 24:29** (Parallel theme): Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.

**Isaiah 50:6** (Parallel theme): I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

**1 Corinthians 6:7** (Parallel theme): Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

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