

HAVE A GRACIOUS ATTITUDE

Matthew 5:40 (NKJV)

40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.

For whatever reason, this person wants to sue you. The most natural thing is to fight back. But Christ says not to retaliate, but instead be gracious.

Again, every situation has to be weighed in view of the whole counsel of God, but Jesus is here dealing with the issue of retaliation and is emphasizing we are to have a completely different spirit – really the exact opposite spirit. Instead of retaliating, we are to be extra gracious!

The “**tunic**” was the inner garment, while the “cloak” was the outer coat-like garment. The law forbade taking away the cloak for it provided warmth in the night and served as a type of blanket (cf. Ex. 22:26-27; Dt. 24:12-13).

Most do not feel that Jesus was saying offer everything and just go home in your loincloth, but rather, again by way of hyperbole, was making the point that we should go to extremes in being gracious versus being vindictive when someone is seeking to legally take advantage of us. He is dealing with our attitude that should indicate that material things are not the most important things to us. Rather gracious God-like character is the main thing.

Matthew 5:41 (NKJV)

41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.

Here, most commentators believe that Christ was referring to the Roman Government’s practice of military personnel having the authority to commandeer civilians to help them carry their supplies. As such they had the authority to press both men and beasts into compulsory service when the interests of the government required it.

An example of this would be when the Roman soldiers pressed Simon the Cyrenian into the service of carrying Christ’s cross.

Luke 23:26 (NKJV)

26 Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus.

“The Jews greatly resented this kind of compulsory service, but the Lord taught that it is our duty to help those who rule over us, to do so cheerfully, and to go beyond the call of duty.” – **John Phillips**

If the government compels us to do something we don’t like, (which is not a moral issue), what should our attitude be? We American Christians, with our emphasis on independence and freedom, tend to struggle with this. We don’t like being told what to do by the government. After all, the government is here to serve us – not the other way around - right?

As one commentator put it: “*This illustration is implicitly anti-Zealot.*” (D.A. Carson). We are not to be revolutionaries who fight against the government at every step and resist its leadership. You say, “**But our government is different?**” Really, have you studied the Roman Government? It ruled with an iron fist. You didn’t mess with Rome, or they might put you on a Roman Cross. We are to be good citizens – with a spirit of being willing to be helpful in the matter of civic duties – even to go the second mile.

All the way through here, Christ is dealing with our attitude. We should not think of “self” but rather seek the other person’s highest good. We should not seek retaliation, we should put people over possessions, and we should be willing to give of ourselves when pressed into service by the governing authorities. These are “kingdom ethics” reflecting a “kingdom attitude.”