

"I Have My Rights! They Can't Do That To Me!"

Oh, really? You have "rights"?

Here is how Jesus viewed "rights":

- *"If someone slaps you in the face, stand there and take it.*
- *"If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff.*
- *"If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt off your back, gift wrap your best coat and make a present of it."*

([Luke 6:29, 30](#); [Matthew 5:40](#) – The Message)

Why is it we find this teaching of Christ so difficult to accept? Let me suggest two reasons:

1. It seems so unfair.

But where in the Bible does God guarantee us fairness — this side of eternity? The fact is, LIFE IS UNFAIR. Your character development is of far greater interest to God than your guarantee of "fairness".

The story of the rich man and Lazarus powerfully reminds us that it is in eternity when God will equalize the books. (See [Luke 16:19-31](#))

2. We might not survive if we allow people to take advantage of us.

Where is it written that you are to survive? Jesus submitted to evil people to the point of allowing them to murder Him. And He calls us to exactly the same standard of surrender:

"Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.

- *"When He was reviled and insulted, He did not revile or offer insult in return.*
- *"When He was abused and suffered He made no threats of vengeance."*

([1 Peter 2:21, 23](#) – New American Standard Bible; Amplified Bible)

QUESTION: Can we trust our *Sovereign God* in simply obeying His Word without rationalization? Without compromise? And leave the outcome to Him? Jesus did, and He calls us to the same quality of faith and obedience.

I Am Slipping ...

- ...**When I** begin to act as if genuine joy is dependent on the state of the circumstances surrounding me.
(Philippians 4:11-13)
- ...**When I** begin to lose the distinct aroma of the fragrance of Christ in my life.
(2 Corinthians 2:15-17)
- ...**When I** begin to feel or act as if my self-worth and acceptance is dependent on how well I perform.
(Romans 5:8)
- ...**When I** am losing my grip on the reality of spiritual warfare. Then I begin to treat my brother or my fellow human being as my enemy and seek to do battle with fleshly weapons.
(Ephesians 6:10-12)
- ...**When I** act as if victory or success depends on me and my ability rather than on the adequacy of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.
(1 John 5:1-5)
- ...**When I** place undue emphasis on programming and planning to the exclusion of His direction, leading and guidance.
(Proverbs 16:1-5, 9)
- ...**When** more time is spent in the "activities arena" than in the prayer closet.
(Matthew 6:6)
- ...**When** the praises of men and women become more important than the approval of God.
(Matthew 6:5)
- ...**When** relating to and caring for people is less important than programs, planning, meetings, and budgets.
(Philippians 2:3-5; 1 John 3:17-18; Proverbs 28:27; Colossians 3:12)
- ...**When I** assume responsibility to worry and fret over things and people that God in His sovereignty and power would take charge of (if I would allow Him to do so).
(Luke 12:22-26; Philippians 4:6-7)
- ...**When** my rights become more important than God's will and way.
(Romans 12:2; Matthew 6:9; Ephesians 5:17)

Obeying God May Seem Illogical And Prove To Be Costly

"I'm going to sue that #@*&+|^ company into the 4th Century! I'm taking them to court for giving me one month's severance instead of the six we agreed upon in the contract!"

So said Sam in his fiery reaction to the mind games his boss had been imposing on him in order to force his resignation. As I listened, I could feel the hair rising on the back of my neck. Managing to keep my composure, I suggested we look at a few passages of Scripture:

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that... But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked." (Luke 6:27b-33, 35) (See Romans 12:18-21)

"Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh... Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, HE ENTRUSTED HIMSELF TO HIM WHO JUDGES JUSTLY." (1 Peter 2:18, 21b-23)

Later, after Sam and his wife had carefully analyzed the above passages, they decided to leave the company graciously, and accept whatever compensation package the management decided upon. What surprised them was the strong opposition they received from "Christian" relatives who insisted they go to court and demand their "rights".

Could the key to how we respond to injustices be determined by our understanding of that little phrase, "HE ENTRUSTED HIMSELF TO HIM WHO JUDGES JUSTLY"? Isn't it only as we see God as the One with the final word that we are able to obey Biblical imperatives that may seem to defy human logic?

It is important for us to understand that at some point God will equalize the books for the injustices visited upon us, and that He will reward us for our uncompromising obedience to His Word, difficult as that obedience may appear at the time. (2 Thessalonians 1:6; Acts 17:31; Revelation 16:5, 6; Matthew 25:34; 1 Peter 1:4)

QUESTIONS: Have you settled it in your heart that you will obey Christ and His teachings, whether they "makes sense" or not? Are you willing to pay the price of that obedience, whatever the cost?

On Becoming Like Jesus

If we desire to be like Jesus Christ, then there are **Four** of **His** characteristics we are to emulate (Philippians 2:5-8 – Phillips Translation):

1. Give up all our rights:

"Let Christ Jesus be your example as to what your attitude should be. For He, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to His prerogatives as God's equal."

Let Us Pray: *"Lord, I relinquish all my rights: To family. To finances. To recognition. To pleasure. To quietness. To health. To privacy. To be loved. To be treated with respect. To justice."*

2. Become nothing:

"[He] stripped Himself of all privilege."

Let Us Pray: *"Lord, I surrender my position. My status. My heritage. My career. My capabilities. My resources. My experience. My reputation. My education."*

3. Become a servant:

"[He consented] to be a slave by nature and [be] born as a mortal man."

Let Us Pray: *"Lord, I abdicate my desire to climb the social and economic scale. I renounce all my rights. I ask you to give me a heart to serve you and others on your terms, not mine. Lord, I love to be regarded by others as a servant; help me to be joyfully willing to be treated as a servant."*

4. Surrender to His Lordship in total obedience:

"And, having become man, He humbled Himself by living a life of utter obedience, even to the extent of dying... the death of a common criminal."

Let Us Pray: *"Lord, I choose to obey you on your terms, not mine. Whatever the cost: Loss of health. Status. Finances. Family. As did Jesus, I pick up the cross you have assigned me, and by your grace I will carry it to the death. In Jesus' Name. Amen."*

The Kingdom Of Self

When a child enters the world from the warm and secure environment of the womb he announces, "*I have arrived, and I expect you – all of you, to respond at once to my every need, whim, and desire!*" And we, the enthralled parents of this little bundle of cuddly "Goo-goo-ga-ga" joyfully comply. Immediately.

And thus the "kingdom of self" is established as "Goo-goo-ga-ga" develops into a paragon of self-centered indulgence in a society where personal "rights" have been elevated to near deity status. And just how does the adult version of "Goo-goo-ga-ga" manifest itself? ***In at least three ways:***

1. Self-indulgence

The insatiable quest for self-gratification focuses on the greedy longings of the mind (uncontrolled imagination, greed, etc.), the physical craving of the body (uncontrolled indulgence in sex, food, sleep, indolence, etc.), and in the unquenchable quest for recognition.

(1 John 2:15-17)

2. Self-protection

The former CEO of a company that went belly up told me how he was hauled into court and queried by the judge as to why the corporation had failed. "*It was my fault. I failed in running the company. I am responsible,*" said he. Stunned, the judge sat in muted silence. Finally, after gaining his composure he uttered, "*In my 20 years on the bench, you are the first person to voluntarily admit they were to blame.*"

Self-protection says, "*It's not my fault.*" "*I couldn't help it.*" "*You don't understand my background*" (Thank you, Freud!) "*The devil made me do it.*" (Remember Flip Wilson?).

(1 Peter 2:16)

3. Self-pity

Self-pity declares, "*No one appreciates me.*" "*I got the shaft.*" "*Why does it always happen to me?*"

(Proverbs 26:12-16)

So what is the solution to relinquishing the enslaving "kingdom of self"?

How about a daily funeral for "self." Better yet, how about a moment-by-moment funeral? "*I am crucified with Christ...*" (Galatians 2:20). In order to die to self we need to win the battle on at least two fronts:

- (1) Regular quality time alone with God in meditation on His Word, worship and prayer.
- (2) Cultivating the art of living moment-by-moment in His presence.

"If Anyone Wants To Follow In My Footsteps, He Must Give Up All Rights To Himself"

Such as:

The right to revenge: *"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth,' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."* (Matthew 5:38, 39)

The right to dignity: *"Do not resist an evil person, If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."* (Matthew 5:39b)

The right to justice: *"If someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well."* (Matthew 5:40b)

The right to freedom: *"If someone forces you to go a mile, go with him two miles."* (Matthew 5:41)

The right to control my resources: *"Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you... Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is there your heart will be also."* (Matthew 5:42; 6:19a, 20a, 21)

The right to hate my enemies: *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..."* (Matthew 5:43-44a)

The right to recognition: *"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 6:1)

The right to bear a grudge: *"If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."* (Matthew 6:14b, 15)

The right to judge others: *"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* (Matthew 7:1, 2)

The right to anything: *"Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."* (Luke 14:33b)

Because, *"The man who wants to save his life will lose it, but the man who loses it for my sake will save it."* (Luke 9:24 – Phillips Translation)