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Non-Retaliation and Love of Enemies (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this second part of his discussion on Non-Retaliation and Love of Enemies, Steve Gregg emphasizes the importance of taking Jesus' teachings on this matter literally, without seeking loopholes or exceptions. He also discusses the idea that loving our enemies does not mean we must condone their actions or refrain from seeking justice, but rather we should not seek revenge or harbor hatred towards them. Gregg encourages Christians to prioritize righteousness over self-preservation and to trust God with the outcomes of any legal disputes or consequences that arise from doing what is right.

Transcript

It is said that if the increase in lawyers continues at its present rate in California, there will be one lawyer for every two citizens by the year 2000. Now, who's going to pay all these lawyers? Who's going to keep these lawyers employed? People with lawsuits. Now, Christians are told to react differently than one naturally would in a lawsuit.

You know, if somebody comes and sues you, it's a very threatening situation. Have you ever had anyone threaten you with a lawsuit? It's kind of scary. It really is.

I mean, if someone comes up and gets in your face and says, I hate you, I'm going to beat you up next time I see you, that's scary too. But somehow it's even more scary when someone says, I'm going to take you before a judge. Somehow the government is far more intimidating.

The legal system, especially if maybe your nose isn't all that clean and you know that maybe they could get you on something. It's scary to be brought before a judge. And to me, I find that when I'm threatened with a lawsuit, it's very rarely happened, but people have sometimes made hints about things.

I've never done anything for which I could be found guilty in a court of law, but sometimes people who have disliked something I did, you know, made such threats. It's kind of threatening, just the thought of having to defend yourself before a judge. Just the thought of having to defend your property or your rights or your freedom or whatever

before a judge.

I find it so. And the very natural reaction is to say, I'll get a good lawyer. I'll defend myself.

I've got a case. And to start already thinking, you know, where this guy has holes in his case and how your case is much stronger than his and so forth, to defend yourself. Well, I don't know whether there's times when you should do that or not.

I somewhat doubt it. But Jesus basically says, if someone wants to sue you for something, give it to them and give them more than what they ask. Now, in all likelihood, this is a case of a hyperbole.

But again, when we say something is a hyperbole, that doesn't drain it of meaning. A hyperbole is simply an exaggeration for the sake of making the point strongly. So obviously, if we don't take it literally, it simply means that we take very strongly the point it's trying to make.

Namely, that instead of defending your possessions through a lawsuit with somebody, you should be willing to surrender them. Save them the court expenses and yourself maybe too. He said earlier, you know, that if they really do have a case against you, settle with them out of court.

Lest they turn you over to the judge and the judge turns you over to the officer and the officer throws you into prison and you won't get out of there until you've paid the last penny. Remember, he said that earlier in the same chapter. So if the person has a case against you, you want to settle out of court.

And that's no doubt what he's expanding on here too. But even if they don't have a case against you, Jesus doesn't say if you think they can get it from you, then surrender it without going to court. He says if they want it, if they want to take you to court to sue you, maybe you don't think that they could win.

But they do or else they wouldn't bother going to court. And if they want to sue you and take away your tunic, let me tell you something. People don't sue people for less than what they think they have coming.

You know that? For instance, if somebody thinks you owe them a million dollars, they're not going to sue you for 10,000. It's more likely that if they think you owe them 10,000, they're going to sue you for a million. That's the nature of man and that's the nature of the legal system.

If somebody wants to sue you for an amount, it's guaranteed they don't even think they have more than that coming. That's the maximum they think they can get. Therefore, to give them that and more means that you give them more than they even think they

could get from you in court.

Now, there are times when I say this proves to be hyperbole because there's no way you could really do this kind of thing. For instance, if you got in an accident and someone sued you for \$10 million. I mean, that happens.

I just heard of some situation where someone was ordered \$8.5 million from some party that they brought a case against. I have no idea how anyone would pay for that. Obviously, they have to declare bankruptcy.

If we were going to take Jesus' sayings absolutely literally and never make any kind of exceptions, say, no, we take this in a legalistic way, that person should give the \$8 million and maybe give a few million besides. But obviously, you can't do that. You don't have it to give.

And therefore, you take this in principle. The idea is that if somebody wants something from you, hey, give it to them. Give it to them.

And give them more. Surprise them. Now, that is certainly what Paul said.

And I think we may have looked at this fairly recently. You see, I teach in other places too and I can hardly remember which points I made here and which points elsewhere. That's one of the weaknesses of teaching more than in one place simultaneously.

But in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul is talking about the fact that Christians are going to law against each other. Now, here it's not only the case that a Christian is being sued, as Jesus gives the example in Matthew 5, if someone wants to sue you. But here it's the case where one Christian is actually initiating a lawsuit against another.

So, one Christian is being sued and the other Christian is doing the suing. Now, the person who sues another does so because he thinks he's within his rights. He thinks that the courts will vindicate him.

He feels that someone has wronged him and that if he gets the courts on his side, he can get what he has coming and he can settle the score equitably. And yet, Paul says you shouldn't do that. He says in verse 7, 1 Corinthians 6, 7, Now, therefore, there's already an utter failure on your part that you go to law against one another.

Why do you not rather accept the wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be defrauded? Now, where does Paul get this idea? No doubt from the Sermon on the Mount. The question of whether a Christian should ever, in any circumstances, sue or resist a lawsuit is a hard one. I'd say, however, that again, we don't take Jesus' sayings as inflexible laws so much as illustrations of what loving behavior tends to do.

Now, when my wife was killed by a young man driving a pickup truck, the insurance

company that had insured the truck, the liability insurance, entitled me to a certain settlement. Before I could even look into it, they appeared on my porch, two guys in flannel suits with a check, saying, here it is, this is the maximum of the policy. The maximum was more money than I ever thought I'd ever have, but it was less than some people said I could get.

There were people who were saying, well, listen, that's a pretty low settlement for a wrongful death situation. You could probably sue for a million dollars. Well, the guy was insured for a million dollars.

He was insured for the amount they were offering me and no more. And people said, well, you know, if you want to make an issue of it, take him to court. A court would certainly go in your favor.

He'd have to sell his house, his cars, he'd have to sell everything. You can get it all from him, you know. I thought, well, what good is that? I mean, it's not going to make my life alive again to run this guy into bankruptcy.

He didn't do it on purpose. I mean, why punish the guy? I was glad to receive the settlement that I was given, but the idea of taking the guy to court, it was abhorrent to me. If anything, I'd like to be a witness to this guy.

This guy's going to have to live with his guilt. He was a 16-year-old kid driving recklessly. He wasn't drunk, but I mean, he saw our splatter on his grill.

I mean, he's going to have some things to live down for the rest of his life. I'd like to make it easier on him, not harder. I mean, I couldn't imagine.

There were Christians saying, you know, you can sue. I'd sue for a million bucks, you know. I can't believe it.

And I said, doesn't the Bible say not to go to court, you know, against people? And they said, well, it only says not to go to court against your brother. You know, the insurance company is not your brother. Well, I can't sue the insurance company for more than they're giving me already.

That's the maximum they're indebted. I'd have to sue the guy himself. He's not my brother, it may be, but I'm not going to sue him, and I didn't.

And you know what? The guy, not the 16-year-old, but his uncle, whose truck he was driving, so it was his uncle who was liable, his uncle got saved later. And I only learned about it by a fluke. It was just providential.

This all happened down in Santa Cruz, and when I moved to Bandon, some other people from Santa Cruz moved up with me and were in our school there. Some of them later

went down to Santa Cruz again, and on one occasion they visited a church that they'd never been to. They went with a friend who wanted them to go to his church.

On that particular Sunday they went there, this guy stood up and testified that he had come to the Lord as a result of this particular accident. And as he described the time the accident took place, the place it took place, and the circumstances, they realized this was the guy who owned the truck that hit my wife. And the guy testified that when his nephew had killed this woman with his truck and he faced heavy-duty liabilities and so forth, it really scared him, and it really made him think about his life more seriously, and he realized that he needed God, and he became a Christian.

It sounds like a story I'm making up, but every word's true. It's really a wonderful thing. This testimony was given five years after the event, and it could have been given on any Sunday in those five years, but it happened to be given the Sunday that some of my friends had me visit that church so that they could report back to me about it.

It was really neat. God, I think, worked that out so that I would realize that something good actually came of this afterwards. But the point is, even though some can get real legalistic and say, well, you're not forbidden to sue a corporation, or you're not forbidden to sue an individual who's not a Christian, well, maybe not, but aren't you supposed to be merciful to the just and to the unjust? Isn't that the very point that Jesus is making? That you're not just kind to your friends and your brothers, you're kind to everybody.

The whole idea is not that you take the Sermon on the Mount and, like the Pharisees, say, okay, I've got to do what it says, but these loopholes I can find here. That's what the rabbis did. They spent their life finding the loopholes.

That's the very thing Jesus is coming against. He's saying, no, what I want you to be is just loving people. Here's how love behaves.

Here's what love does. Here's how love makes a difference in the way you respond to these situations. And if somebody wants to sue you, or you have a case against somebody, it may be that you could win, but why try? Why bother? If you win, they'll still think they have it coming, they'll just be more resentful toward you.

Why not just give it to them and give them more too? They value it more than you do, your possessions. And if you value it as much as they do, shame on you. If you value your house and your land and your car and your money as much as the person who wants to sue you for it does, shame on you.

You should know better than that. You know those things have no value, or extremely little value. And when Jesus says, give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you, don't turn away, we know that in Luke's version it's even more strong.

He says, and if someone takes something from you, don't ask for it back. And lend,

expecting nothing in return. That's what it says in the passage we read in Luke 6. Once again, at the risk of sounding like a broken record, I believe that the statement, give to him who asks you, is a hyperbole.

But only in this respect, that there are times when other biblical principles would forbid you to give to somebody. In 2 Thessalonians 3, in verse 10, and the surrounding context, 2 Thessalonians 3, Paul says that those who will not work should not be provided for by the church. Christians should not support those who are choosing to live in a lazy lifestyle.

For one thing, it's not a loving thing to do. It only encourages them to live a fruitless life. They're made for better things than that, and they have responsibilities before God to do better than that.

And for you to simply underwrite their slothful lifestyle is not doing a loving thing for them, and it's wrong for you to do. And so Paul says, those who don't work should not eat. And that's a little difficult sometimes, because we sometimes have compassion even on people who are in bad condition because they're lazy.

But there is a time when love, as Dr. Dobson says, must be taught. And when you have to say, well listen, because I love you, I'm not going to bail you out of this situation. You can get out of it yourself.

Now, if you can't get out of it yourself, I'll certainly try to help you out and put you in a position where you can get on your feet. But if it's simply a matter of you're refusing to do what you can do, and you're just begging because you don't want to work and don't want to do something, then I'm afraid I can't condone and sponsor that lifestyle. It's a sinful lifestyle.

Same thing if somebody's begging for money, and you know they're going to go out and buy booze with it. You can't underwrite that lifestyle. But, I mean, you can give them something they really need.

I mean, Peter, when he was walking into Jerusalem in the East Gate, there was a beggar there begging for money. He was crippled. And Peter said, silver and gold I have none, but such as I have I'll give you.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And the guy was healed. Now, maybe we don't have the power to heal every lame person we see.

Maybe we do. It depends on your theology on that. I personally don't think we do.

I think there's going to be people that you'd say that to, and they still lay there unhealed. But in this case, Peter knew that he had the anointing to heal the man. And what the man needed more than a handout was his legs out.

You know, he needed his legs straightened. He needed to be able to be made able-bodied so he can go and supply for himself. And when Peter said, I don't have any silver and gold, how could that possibly be? The very previous chapter says that everyone in the church sold their property and laid their possessions at Peter's feet.

The guy must have been rolling in silver and gold. But it wasn't his. It was the church's.

It was for distribution to the poor. But here was a poor man at the gate asking for help. Why didn't Peter give it to him? Because in this case, the guy could benefit more from something else.

Another handout wouldn't help him. I mean, it would help him temporarily, but to heal him would set him free to provide for himself. And that's what he got instead of a handout.

You know, give to everyone that asks you obviously is a way of saying, you need to be super abundantly generous. You need to be so compassionate and merciful to people who are really in need that you are glad to give them, it doesn't matter who they are, anyone, whether it's a Samaritan, whether it's someone of a feuding family from yours, whether it's somebody of a class of people that you hate or that you've culturally been conditioned to hate or whatever. You still need to love them and you need to do good to them.

When he says give to everyone, I think he means that you don't discriminate on the basis of prejudice and things like that. It doesn't mean that there is no circumstance in which you should withhold your gift. There are circumstances where the Bible itself says you should withhold your gift.

What if a parent gave everything his child asked for to him? I mean, hey, give to everyone who asks you. Oh, my kid asks for ice cream every day, every meal. They don't want to eat any good food, they just want to eat ice cream and candy all the time.

Everything they ask for, I'd give them. I'd be bankrupt soon. And obviously, this is why I say the statement is a hyperbole.

But when we say that it's an exaggeration, some might think that that softens it. It doesn't soften at all. It just means that Jesus employs a hyperbole because he wants to say this strongly and powerfully that you should be generous, you should be compassionate, you should be concerned about people's needs.

You should be more willing to give them the right to spend your money than to retain the right for yourself to spend your money. Again, it's giving up your rights to someone else. The other illustration he gives in verse 41, he who compels you to go one mile, go with him two.

You may be aware that the Roman law allowed Roman soldiers, because they had gear and armor and stuff to tote around, like all soldiers do, the soldiers were permitted to grab any citizen of one of the occupied territories that Rome had conquered to grab the citizen and compel him to carry his luggage for him. But there was a limit to it. He could do it one mile and no further.

So that if the soldier had to go more than one mile, he could press one guy into service for a mile, but he had to release him after that and he had to find someone else to carry his gear the next mile. And that is clearly what Jesus is talking about. There's no other circumstance known in history, at least of the period, in which a person could compel you to go one mile.

But Jesus is clearly referring to that situation. So he says, you Christians, if a Roman soldier walks up to you and says, listen, carry this for me, and you know and he knows he can only make you carry it a mile, when you get to the end of that first mile, blow his mind. And do what he doesn't have the right to compel you to do, go another mile with him, save him the trouble of finding someone else and save somebody else the trouble of going one mile.

That's a merciful thing to do. Now it's an inconvenience, even to go one mile is an inconvenience. To go two would be twice the inconvenience.

But it's merciful. It's going beyond what you're required to do. Now, to go one mile with a soldier who compelled you is no virtue.

You're compelled to do that. That's required by law. That's just giving the soldier what is his due under law.

That's justice. That's giving him what's his right. Going a second mile is mercy.

The first mile is justice. The second mile is mercy. And as I once heard a preacher say many years ago, many people talk about going the second mile when they haven't even gone the first mile.

There are people who are in some circumstances merciful and generous, but they're not paying their bills, they're not paying their taxes, they're not caring for their family, they're not doing the things that justice requires them to do. I mean, there are guys who get drunk and their kids live in poverty and lack meals and so forth, but when they get drunk, they get real generous and they hand out, you know, \$50 bills and \$100 bills to everyone around. You know, I mean, they're stupid.

You know, I've got, oh, what a generous guy. Yeah, real merciful. But the trouble is he's neglecting his obligations.

And if we don't do at least justice, we can't do mercy because you can't go a second mile

until you've gone one. You can't go beyond and give up your rights while you're still depriving someone else of theirs. Mercy picks up where justice ends.

Justice is the first step toward mercy. You do justice first and you add mercy to that. You go two miles when they can only compel you to do one.

Now, verse 43. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. If you have the New King James, you'll notice that you shall love your neighbor is in italics.

That means it's, the New King James italicizes quotes from the Old Testament. And you shall love your neighbor, very clearly, is a quote from the Old Testament. It's one of the most frequently quoted Old Testament verses.

It's found in Leviticus 19.18. But the part, and hate your enemy, is not in italics. And the reason it's not is because it's not in the Old Testament. There's no place in the Old Testament that says to hate your enemy.

Now, apparently, if these people had heard tell from their rabbis that they should love their neighbor and hate their enemy, the rabbis were certainly going beyond what the Old Testament actually said to do. Therefore, we come for the first time to Jesus quoting something that these people have been told that goes beyond what the law actually says. All the previous five cases, he's actually quoted the law itself.

Here, he also quotes the law, but he knows that these people have heard an addendum to the law, which is not biblical. Now, why would anyone think that the law taught that you should hate your enemy? It doesn't ever say to hate your enemy. But there are places that could give that impression.

I mean, think about it. When God told Joshua to go in and wipe out the Canaanites, He said, Show no mercy, spare no one. Don't let your eye pity them.

Just wipe them all out. Certainly, that could give one the impression that you should hate your enemies. David himself, in some of the Psalms, spoke with great vindictiveness towards certain wicked people in the imprecatory Psalms, giving the profound impression that he hated the wicked.

In fact, in one Psalm, he says to God, he says, How I hate those who hate you. Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred. No doubt passages like that might encourage some of the rabbis to say, well, we should hate our enemies.

But what you'll notice is that the people that David hated and the people that Joshua was told to wipe out and the Amalekites, whom Saul was told to wipe out, they were not to be wiped out because they were Saul's enemies or Joshua's enemies or David's enemies, but because they were God's enemies. David and others in the Old Testament were

always told to do good to their personal enemies, but God's enemies were sometimes to be punished by the Israelites because the Israelites were a nation with an army that God intended to employ toward the punishment of evildoers. Now, the church today, of course, is not an army.

It's not a nation. It's not a political nation, that is. It's a spiritual nation, and the war we do is spiritual warfare, not physical.

But Israel was a physical nation and conducted physical warfare like other physical nations, and when it did, it was used by God as a punishment of His enemies. Now, that means, of course, that the question of loving one's own enemies is a different question than that which would be addressed by God's charge to Joshua to wipe out the Canaanites or David's hatred of God's enemies, who hate God. And the Old Testament actually encourages love for your enemies.

There is a law in Exodus that says if you see your enemy's ox wandering astray, he obviously has gotten away, you shall take him back to the man who owns him, even though the man is your enemy. Do him a favor. Take his ox back to him.

If you see the donkey of your enemy, of the man who hates you, fallen under its load and the owner is struggling to get the donkey back on his feet and he doesn't have quite enough strength, you go help him. Now, what is this but saying do good to the man who hates you? Do good to those who are your enemies. That's in the Old Testament.

That's in Exodus. That's right in the table of the covenant. And I don't remember exactly what passage, but it's in Exodus somewhere between chapter 21 and 23.

Likewise, in the Old Testament, the Proverbs say the same thing. In Proverbs 25, verses 21 and 22. Proverbs 25, verses 21 and 22.

Paul quotes it in Romans 12, 20. Therefore, if your enemy hungers, feed him. If he, that is your enemy, thirsts, give him a drink.

What is that but do good to your enemies? Therefore, in the Old Testament, there was some confusion by the Jews as to how to view their enemies. On the one hand, those who were God's enemies were sometimes the target for God's judgment and sometimes the Israelites were the tools of God's judgment. But even so, while killing the Canaanites, it wasn't because the Jews had a personal grievance against the Canaanites themselves.

The Canaanites had never attacked them. Abram, Isaac, and Jacob had wandered peaceably among the Canaanites and were never molested by them. The Jews didn't have a gripe with the Canaanites.

And it shouldn't be because the Jews coveted the land of the Canaanites. Coveting land is against their law. You should not covet your neighbor's house.

You should not covet your neighbor's land and so forth. So, when Hitler went into wherever and conquered various countries around him, he did it because he coveted their land. When the Jews went in and took Canaan, it wasn't because they coveted the land.

It's because God said, it's time to judge these Canaanites and I'm going to give you their land because it's going to be vacant. Proverbs 25, was it? 21 and 22? Yeah. Exodus 23.4, thank you.

Okay, so we can see that if the Jews of Jesus' time had been told, love your neighbor and hate your enemy, they were told wrongly. There was a misrepresentation of the law. And what Jesus has to say about loving your enemy is not some newfangled thing.

It's just bringing out what was covered over by wrong teaching that the law itself taught. And that's often, you know, often all that good teaching requires and prophetic teaching requires. The prophets of the Old Testament, they didn't make new instructions.

They just called people back to the old ones. They just called people back to the law. A lot of preaching today needs to be the same way.

It's not that we need new revelations from God. Jesus didn't even bring that many new revelations from God. Virtually everything he taught was there before.

It's just that centuries of traditions of men had covered over what God had said. And people were more aware of what man's teachings were than what God's were. And so to get a shovel and remove all that pile of traditions off and to lay bare the truth that was always there is what Jesus did.

And that's what often needs to be done to the church today because we live in an age where 2,000 years worth of human traditions have obscured what the Bible actually says too. It's not really much different than what Jesus had to do. Well, he says, you've heard that, love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Now part of this verse is not found in the Alexandrian text and therefore it won't be found in some modern translations.

Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. That you may be the sons of your Father in heaven.

Now, someone there has the NIV. What part is included in verse 44 in the NIV? It's pretty characteristic of all the modern translations. New American Standard would be the same, I think.

How does... Okay, okay. Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you.

So it leaves out bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you. Now, even though that is left out of the Alexandrian text in Matthew, it is included in Luke 6. So we know that Jesus actually said the words. He may not have... Matthew may not have recorded them or he may have, but they are found in the teaching of Jesus in a text that's not disputed.

In the parallel in Luke 6, 27 and 28, Luke 6, 27 and 28, Jesus says, So I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. The very three things that are left out of Matthew 5, 44 in the Alexandrian text, those same three lines are found in Luke and the Alexandrian text includes them there. So there's not any dispute over whether Jesus really said those words, whether they were found in Matthew originally or not is questionable.

But the point is that Jesus said to do all these things. Bless those who curse you rather than cursing back. Do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

So in addition to not fighting back, you should turn around and surprise them with a good deed to be kind to them, to go out of your way to help them. There are many wonderful examples of Christians having done just this thing in history. Certainly there's no better example than that of Jesus himself.

It is said that the lily perfumes the hand that crushes it. And certainly Jesus perfumed the world that rejected him. Jesus was rejected and murdered by the world and crushed by the world, but he only blessed the world through that.

And he, of course, has provided centuries of blessing and actually an eternity of blessing to persons like ourselves who were formerly his enemies and did very many things wrongly against him. So Jesus is the best example of this, of course, but the apostles are good examples of that, too. Paul ministered to the jailer in Philippi who had kept him in jail and who had no doubt put him in irons.

He prevented the man from killing himself when in fact if the man had killed himself, Paul and all the prisoners could have run free and escaped, but it wouldn't have been good for the jailer. Paul did good to the one who persecuted him, who imprisoned him, and so forth. I mean, this was typical, very typical of what Christian behavior has been in the first three centuries.

And, of course, there are modern stories as well. There should be plenty. There should be stories of it in your life.

Unless you've never had anyone do any harm to you, unless you've never had anyone curse you or speak evil of you, you should have examples in your own life before you

have turned around and blessed those who did you harm. And he says you should do this, verse 45, so that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven. Now earlier in one of the Beatitudes in verse 9 of Matthew 5, he said, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.

Certainly there's a parallel here. When somebody wants to hurt you and you do good to them, you're being a peacemaker. If someone wants to hurt you and you try to hurt them back, you're escalating the conflict.

You're not making peace. Now, armies are sometimes called peacemaking or peacekeeping forces. But war is not a way of peacemaking.

I only caught the end of a news clip, a sound bite on the radio last night, I think it was, on secular news. And I don't even know who it was about or where it was, but this lady was, apparently she's part of a feuding family. Maybe some of you know what it is.

I just couldn't connect it because I only heard the last few words. But it was a sound clip of this lady saying, We're all one family and I want this fighting and feuding to end. And I thought, well, I don't know what the situation is, but it must be something significant enough to be newsworthy.

I mean, it must be some major feud or some major race war or something going on. But I thought how futile it is for someone to get up and say, We're one family, we want this to end if Christ is not being honored. Because why should it, I mean, let's face it, how does a feud start? Somebody feels wronged by someone else and wants to be vindicated, wants the score settled in their favor.

And unless one party is going to say, Okay, have it your way, then the feud is going to continue. As long as one party says, You owe this to me, you wronged me in this situation, the other person says, No, I don't. I didn't do anything wrong to you.

And you say, Yes, you did. No, I don't. You know, you took this territory from me.

No, that was my territory and so forth. That feud, you can talk about how, Oh, we're one big family, let's not have any feuding. But it's one thing to talk about peace.

It's another thing to make peace. And you know how you make peace? By surrendering. You make peace by giving up.

You're right. Someone wants to hurt you, you give it to them. They want to take it from you, you give it to them.

You bless them. Now, you might say, That sounds kind of risky. Well, it is risky if what you're after is financial security in this world and physical security in this world.

If your life in this world is all that important, then it's very risky. However, over in

Matthew 16, and actually in all four of the Gospels, Jesus makes either this statement or one like it. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record this statement.

And John has a similar statement given on a different occasion. But in Matthew 16, 25, Jesus said, Whoever desires to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

The passage in John that is like this but is not parallel is John 12, 25. Apparently, that's what my cross-reference says here. Let me turn to it here.

John 12, 25. Jesus said, He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Now, to hate your life in this world as opposed to loving your life and trying to keep it and save it, that definitely goes against our grain.

Of course, there's no instinct stronger in man, in natural man, than to preserve his life. But Jesus said, You've got to have a new nature. You've got to have new instincts.

You've got to have new priorities. You've got to not view your life in this world as all that important. It's only short anyway.

At its very longest, it's still short. It's still a vapor. James says, What is your life? It's only a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

That is how we are. Another passage says, All flesh is as grass. As the flower of the field, they pass away.

Human life, even if one lives a full lifetime, is short. Therefore, to place high value on comfort, prosperity, good health, long life in this world is to go right against the principles. Jesus says, You love your life in this world? You seek to save your life in this world? Your priorities are all wrong.

And if you don't love your life in this world, then it's easy to surrender. When someone says, Give me this or I'll kill you. You know? Well, I'll give it to you and you can kill me if you want.

I mean, but the point is, the point is, peacemaking is done by surrendering your rights. As long as somebody wants what's yours and you want it too, and neither of you are going to yield, the feud will continue. The war will continue.

The peacemaker says, I know how to end this. I'll give up. I'll surrender.

I'll give over what this person wants. I'll make him happy. I'll give him my cloak also.

And that is being a peacemaker. And Jesus says, Do that so that you may be sons of your father. And that's because he said, Blessed are the peacemakers, they should be called the sons of God.

Yeah, Jimmy. I've probably told you this before, but I've only on one occasion in my entire ministry had occasion to turn the other cheek. I've only been struck once for my convictions by someone who opposed them.

And I turned the other cheek and the guy didn't hit me again. He went away weeping. And he looked me up the next day and he apologized to me and said he felt terrible.

And the guy was my enemy. The guy, if we had contact, he's still my enemy today. Not because I want him to be.

I've got nothing against him. I've written to him and told him so, but he still writes me hate letters. But he just got so convicted.

He just got so convicted when he hit me that God comes to your aid. That's the thing. If you don't defend yourself, there's two possibilities.

You'll die or God will defend you. Either one is okay. For God to defend you is far better than for you to defend yourself.

And for you to die doing the righteous thing is far better than for you to live as a result of doing the wrong thing. Any Christian would agree with that. It's better to die righteous and uncompromised than to live as a result of compromise, as a result of not doing quite the right thing.

That's a hard saying. But Christianity is hard on the flesh. It's hard on our selfishness.

And after he says that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven, he amplifies by saying what God is like. And we've already commented on this. He says, For he makes his son to rise on the evil and on the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

And we saw in Luke, he said, For he is good and kind to the unthankful and to the evil. So, Jesus reminds us of what God is like. He says, Now you want to be his sons? Then you've got to be like him.

Now it doesn't mean, and I pointed this out earlier, you don't become a son of God by being like him. You exhibit your sonship by being like him. You exhibit that there is such a relationship by being like him.

And I pointed out earlier that if my son looks like me, he doesn't become my son by looking like me. He looks like me because he's my son. Now he doesn't look that much like me, but it's common enough.

He looks more like me than he looks like some of you here in the room. And the point is, to whatever degree he resembles his parents, he does so not in order to be a child, but he does so because he is a child. And so, if you are loving like God is loving, and you are

merciful like God is merciful, you will show yourself to have the characteristics that are God's characteristics.

You will show yourself to be truly a son of God, or a daughter of God. In the Old Testament, it is said that the merciful person will be rewarded by God. One place in Proverbs says that he that has mercy on the poor lends to the Lord, and the Lord will repay him.

In Matthew chapter 6, the passage we come to next in our studies, Jesus said, Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men to be seen by them, otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do charitable deeds, which would be to give a gift to the poor, whatever, that's a merciful thing to do, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do, etc., etc. But, verse 3, when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

So yes, the answer is there is a reward for being merciful. And, you know, for one kind of mercy or for any other kind of mercy, there is a reward from God. If you don't vindicate yourself, you engage God, really, is what happens.

If you defend yourself, God remains, in a sense, aloof in the situation. He says, you want to help yourself? Go ahead. I'll wait until you need me, until you call for me.

But, when you will not defend yourself, God is engaged in the situation. God is under obligation. He obligates Himself.

He is the one who told you to turn the other cheek. Therefore, He must take responsibility for your obedience and for the consequences of your obedience. Therefore, if you turn the other cheek and die, it is because God wanted you to die at that time.

I mean, many people died martyrs. And not one of them, at least that I've ever read about, there may have been some who did, but I've never read of martyrs in church history who fought back against the gladiators or against the lions or against the inquisitors or whatever. I mean, there may have been some.

But, typically, martyrs, for Christ, just say, hey, this is my day. You know, this is my day to go. Why fight it? The providence of God.

I mean, God can stop the mouth of lions. He did it for Daniel. But, if God doesn't stop them, I'm not going to try.

And, you know, let's face it. If God wants you to die, he can arrange it, even if you try to save yourself. And the worst thing that could happen is that God wants you to die and you succeed in living.

Without God. Without God's will. The day he wants you to die is the day he's finished with you in this world.

After that, who wants to stay around? So, I mean, one thing, two things will happen. When you don't defend yourself, you put yourself in God's hands. You engage God's aid in the situation.

And, in so doing, you can be sure that the consequences that come will be from God. And, if that's death or if that's salvation, that is, you know, deliverance from the situation, in either case, it's fine. Let me turn you to two passages where this is amplified in 1 Peter and then we'll be done.

1 Peter chapter 2. We'll start at verse 18. Well, we'll start at verse 19. 1 Peter 2, 19.

For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But if when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called.

You weren't called to live high and unmolested in this world. You were called to do good and suffer for it and take it patiently, it says. That's what you were called to.

Why? Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. Some people think that since Christ suffered, we don't have to suffer. No, He suffered, leaving us an example of suffering.

And what is an example but that which is to be followed? What does it say of Him? He committed no sin. No guilt was found in His mouth. So clearly, whatever happened to Him, it was undeserved.

Verse 23. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten.

But what did He do? He committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. And what happened to Jesus when He committed Himself to Him who judges righteously? He died. But He was later vindicated and resurrected.

But when He said, Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit, next thing that happened, He died. When you commit yourself in the hands of God, that's no guarantee you're going to survive. But there is guarantee that you're going to be righteous and you're going to be right with God.

And that's better than surviving. Now look at 1 Peter 4, 19. Well, let's start earlier than that.

Verse 14 through 19. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you for

the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or a busybody in other men's matters. In other words, don't let some fault of your own be the cause of your suffering. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, that is just because he is a Christian and for no other reason, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. And if it begins with us first, obviously he means we the church are the house of God. What will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now, if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? Therefore, verse 19 is what I want you to pay attention to here.

Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God do what? Commit their souls to Him. That's exactly what Jesus did. We saw in 1 Peter 2, He said in verse 23, Jesus when He was reviled, He did not revile in return.

When He suffered, He didn't threaten, but what did He do? He committed Himself to God and died. What are we supposed to do when we suffer? Well, the same thing. Commit your souls to Him.

How? In doing good. That is by doing the right thing. By doing what God said to do.

And you do this to Him as to a faithful creator. That is, you esteem Him faithful. You trust Him.

You trust God in the situation and do the right thing. You don't do the thing that your visceral reaction would be necessarily or that your carnal reaction would be, your first impulse, your instinctive impulse would be. Do the thing that He would have you do.

Do the thing He would do. And in so doing, you are committing yourself to Him, not committing it into your own hands. You commit it into your own hands and you've got yourself to defend you.

No more. You commit yourself into God's hands and He is your defense and He'll get you out of it one way or another. And you do so because you regard Him to be faithful.

That means it's an act of faith. As I've said many times, I don't think there's... I can repeat it too many times because I want you to have it burned into your consciousness. Living by faith means little more than simply to do what God said and leave the consequences to Him.

Don't worry about the consequences. Just do what He said. Whatever consequences are His to bother about.

You commit yourself to Him. That means the circumstances and the future and the consequences are all now in His court. You put them in His hands by not taking them into yours.

You commit them to Him. Just like if I had trouble with my car and I was messing around under the hood and I don't know a thing about it and Todd comes up and says, Listen, I think I could fix that for you. Just give me a few hours with it.

I say, Well, I'll help you out here. But I don't know a thing of what I'm doing. I'd just be in the way.

To commit it to Him means I take my hands off it and just put it in His hands. Let Him work it out. I judge Him to be competent.

I trust Him. I put it in His hands. I don't worry about it anymore.

I expect the next time I see it, it'll be taken care of properly. And that is what it means to commit something. By the way, I don't have any car troubles right now, Todd.

That's what we do to God when we suffer. We don't take matters into our own hands and bring retribution and retaliation and vindication for ourselves. We leave it to Him.

We do the loving thing. We do the right thing. And in so doing, we turn it over to God to do what He wants in a situation.

And we accept whatever consequences He gives. So that Jesus prayed, Father, let this cup pass from me. But when the Father didn't let this cup pass from Him, He said, Well, the cup my Father's given me, shall I not drink it? I've left the circumstances in His hands.

Is this what He wants to give me? I accept it. That's what faith is. I obey God and trust Him with the consequences.

Period. Okay. And, of course, mercy is the main issue of this portion we've been reading.

We'll get into... We'll talk about religion next time in Chapter 6. Any questions?