

OpenTheo

Matthew 5:38 - 5:48: Non-Resistance to Evil



Sermon on the Mount - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg shares a discussion on non-resistance to evil, referencing Matthew 5:38-48 in the Bible's Sermon on the Mount. He explains that love is a moral obligation and a distinctly biblical concept, not simply an emotion or subjective feeling. Gregg emphasizes that non-resistance means not physically resisting evil, but avoiding conflicts and absorbing injury rather than retaliating. He suggests that living peaceably with others and overcoming evil with good are ways to fulfill our God-given Christian vocation.

Transcript

There's only one section left to cover in Matthew 5 as we go through the Sermon on the Mount. Of course, Matthew 5 is only the first of three chapters that are occupied with this sermon, but coming to the end of chapter 5 is coming to a turning point, of course. And we've been, in the previous sessions, discussing the section that began at verse 17, where Jesus is talking about the law and its relationship to true righteousness.

Being righteous is to do what's right and to be right with God. And the law of God was given through Moses in order to define, to a certain degree, the righteous conduct that God expects people to observe. The people in Jesus' day had followed, or at least known of these laws for the most part, for 1400 years, but many times they had not followed them at all.

Sometimes they'd lost sight of them altogether, and other times they were attempting to follow the laws, but often with a very inadequate understanding of what it was at the heart of God's commands. And such was the case in Jesus' own day, where the leading religious teachers were the rabbis, who were typically of the Pharisaic order, and the Pharisees' interpretations tended to be mixed a great deal with rabbinic traditions and characterized by a high degree of externalism, so that when you'd read in the law, you shall not kill or you shall not commit adultery, it was enough to the Pharisee that he had not murdered anybody or slept with his neighbor's wife. And Jesus is pointing out that these commands of the law are valid and true, but that they are valid and true for deeper reasons than have been perceived thus far by the Jewish people.

And that it's not simply murder that is wrong just because there's a command not to commit murder, but there's a larger class of concern with justice in general, of which the commands about murder and adultery are simply examples of God's concern about these things, but do not exhaust the applications of his interest and passion for justice. And as we also saw, there are laws about divorce and about oaths that Jesus discussed, and these also were not merely to be followed just to the letter without any consideration of what was behind them. The purpose of an oath is to keep people honest.

The purpose of a marriage vow is to keep people honest. There were, because of the hardness of heart, instances, because of the fall, because of sin, instances where God would permit divorce. But his permission to do so should not be construed as an escape from the requirement to keep one's vows.

And likewise, the vows should not be so manipulated as to be able to allow one to be dishonest while even using vows. And we saw that the Pharisees, and probably the Jews following their teaching for the most part, tended to miss the fact that what God really wanted in talking about, in instituting marriage, and even in allowing divorce under certain circumstances, but not all, and in requiring oaths, that God is emphasizing the need to keep one's word, and to be honest, to be faithful. Now I have pointed out a few sessions back, and repeated it in most of the sessions that have occurred since then, that the weightier matters of the law, according to Jesus, in Matthew 23, 23, are justice and faithfulness and mercy.

And that these three together are really what make up love, in the biblical sense of that word. If you behave justly, if you behave mercifully, if you behave faithfully toward another, you are in so doing behaving lovingly. And the flip side of that is true also, that you cannot be behaving lovingly if you are not being just.

You are not behaving lovingly if you are not being faithful. And you are certainly not being loving if you are not being merciful. And so, love simply breaks down into these basic components.

Now I don't mean to make love into a sterile, emotionless kind of thing. Of course you can be just and merciful and faithful without any emotion at all. And when we think of love, we think of something more fervent, something more affectionate, maybe something at times more passionate.

What I've said thus far is not intended to remove any validity from the emotion and affection that goes with love. But emotion and affection are much more subjective. They are more subject to corruption.

You can have great affection for something that's totally unworthy of affection and something that will corrupt you to love it. But doing the right thing to somebody, doing

to somebody else what you would have them do to you, regardless of your feelings about them, is really what the core of love is. It may also be, and it's ideally, accompanied by positive feelings.

But I remember when I was a child being told in Sunday school that although you have to love everybody, you don't have to like everybody. Only they put it the other way around. You don't have to like everybody, but you have to love everybody.

And I must confess as a child that sounded more like double talk than a profound statement. But as I came to understand more what the Bible says about love and what I understand the word like to mean, I realized that that is really entirely true. You don't have to like everybody.

It helps if you like the people you're with. It makes life more pleasant for you. But it's not necessary to like them, and what you like and don't like often is beyond your power to decide.

You might not like butterscotch ice cream, but you like chocolate. Somebody else may not like chocolate, but they like butterscotch. There's no accounting for taste.

But taste is very much what like is about. You like things that appeal to your tastes. There is no moral virtue and no moral vice in liking a certain kind of personality or not liking a certain kind of personality.

Finding a certain kind of chatter or laughter or whatever irritating to you or finding it amusing and enjoyable. Those are simply the distinctions of personality that don't carry a moral stigma one way or the other. And they are the things that determine whether you like somebody or not.

And if somebody treats you very badly, it is probable that you will not like that treatment. You might not like their company. And in that sense, you might not like them very much.

But that is a very different issue than whether you love them. Because love, as I say, is something that exists with or without the accompanying emotions that we often associate in our romantic literature and song with love. Love means that I would die for a person.

Love means that I would give up my rights in order to meet needs of another person. Love means I will do the just thing, the faithful thing, and the merciful thing toward other people. This I can do toward people I don't like much or people that I like a great deal.

The only difference is that if I like them, it makes loving them enjoyable. If I don't like them, I still must love them, but I'm not going to enjoy it quite to the same degree. Because when you have affection for someone, you naturally want to make sacrifices for

them.

If you don't have that kind of affection, you can still make those sacrifices. You can still love them. You can still put them first in your dealings.

You may even learn to like them. I mean, tastes in some things can be changed. But I'm not saying that you are required to learn to like such people.

This is what I want you to understand. Love is a moral obligation. Liking something is not a moral obligation, but it makes loving them more enjoyable if you like them too.

If you're going to make sacrifices for someone, you'll probably enjoy doing so if you like them a great deal, if you have affection for them, if you have feeling for them. If you don't, that doesn't change anything. You can still love them, because love is an earthly, practical, down-to-earth behavioral thing.

That introduces reasonably well the section of the Sermon on the Mount we're coming to, which is Matthew 5, 38 through 48. As we had two examples from Jesus that I say illustrate God's concern for justice, and two illustrations or examples that demonstrate God's concern for faithfulness, if my beginning thesis is true, then we would expect to find a couple of illustrations of God's concern for mercy, the remaining segment of what comprises love. And we are not disappointed when we come to this material, because that's exactly what we find.

Jesus said in verse 38, You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you not to resist an evil person, but whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.

And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him too. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you, do not turn away. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you.

Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. That you may be sons of your Father in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. Well, we can see there are two instances here, in verse 38 and in verse 43, where Jesus says, You have heard that it was said. And, as usual, in verse 39

and verse 44, he says, But I say unto you.

So he gives examples of what they have heard, and then he gives his own comments on it. And the first thing they had heard was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Now this piece of legislation, this is a smaller piece of a larger passage.

It's found actually more than once in the Old Testament. It seems to be repeated at least three times. It's in Exodus 21, 24.

It's also found in Leviticus 24, 20 and Deuteronomy 19, verse 21. The longer passage says, An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, stroke for stroke, burn for burn, life for life. And, obviously, what it is saying is, If a person injures a person in a certain measure and in a certain way, then a like injury is due him.

The inflictor of such injury is due to experience the infliction of the equal injury upon himself. Many people feel that Jesus, when he said, But I tell you, don't resist the evil man, was somehow nullifying the law on this point. In fact, there are many out there who believe that Jesus, in the teaching on the Sermon on the Mount, basically was making a new law that was different from the Old Testament law.

And the best example they can find of it, they think, is this one. Here, Jesus said, You have heard the law says, An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But, of course, Jesus didn't believe in that.

We don't believe in that. That's rather cruel. That's a rather unloving, unkind way to react if someone pokes my eye out for me to go and poke his eye out.

I ought to be, you know, two wrongs don't make a right and so forth. And, therefore, Jesus had a more enlightened view, they say, than the law, when it said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I would say to you that if Jesus is disagreeing with this law here, it is the only case in all six of these examples where he's actually disagreeing with the law that he quotes.

He actually does not say these laws are bad, even when he says, Well, don't bother to make oaths. Even if the law says you must perform your oaths, well, you should perform your oaths, but you can even go further than that and not even make oaths in the first place. Just be honest.

And, likewise, when he talks about whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce, he doesn't nullify that. He just says, Don't do it, except in the cause of sexual immorality. Any other cause creates an unfaithful situation.

So, Jesus amplifies, clarifies, but he does not change the meaning or throw out the law. He does not invalidate the law. And, in my understanding, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, it is given in the Old Testament as a guide to the magistrates, to the judges.

Israel, of course, had three kinds of laws. We've talked about the ceremonial and the moral laws, but they also had another category, which we would have to call the civil laws, the case law. This is the kind of law that governed criminal complaints.

If a person stole from another person and they were taken before the magistrates and some kind of decision had to be made as to what would be done to the thief, or if a person broke the Sabbath, or if a person killed somebody or destroyed some property with fire, these are cases where people would have legal recourse to have justice determined by the judges. Now, of course, there is behind all civil law some kind of moral law, but the civil law was basically what the judges were supposed to do to make sure that a criminal situation had been properly redressed in a just manner. And if a person came and killed one of my oxen, and I had ten, and I went and took him to court and said, this man has killed one of my oxen and I can prove that it was true, and there were two witnesses, then the man would have to forfeit an oxen himself, a piece of property for a like piece of property.

If he had attacked me without provocation and hit me in the eye and destroyed my eye and I was no longer able to see, then the judge would have to say, well, sir, you've injured this man's eye, the just thing is for you to have to sustain a similar injury. Now, that might seem strange to us because our courts have become so flabby that we don't even kill murderers. And, in fact, even if we put out the eye of a murderer and left him alive, that would be considered cruel and unusual punishment in our courts of law.

However, it should be not thought for a moment that our courts of law or our culture or even our instincts are the best arbiters of justice. God knows what is just. And, really, a disinterested party looking on without any kind of cultural baggage attached to his vision could easily see that you steal ten dollars from me, you pay ten dollars from me, and ten dollars comes out of your account to replace what came out of mine.

That's equal. That's just. I lost my eye through no fault of my own because of your actions.

For you to lose your eye would be entirely just. Now, the hard thing is to get the courts to enforce it because it's hard, without passion, to bring yourself to injure another person. I mean, the guy who knocks my eye out is probably angry at me.

The judge doesn't even know the guy. He doesn't have any personal anger. He just coldly says, OK, your eye knocked out.

I mean, it's hard to bring oneself to do harm to a person after the fact when it's not in the heat of a conflict or anger, and therefore it seems heartless and inhuman to do that. But, actually, Jesus did not lay out in his teaching here an alternative system of justice for the magistrates. He did not say, OK, from now on, when someone comes to court and they've robbed someone, just let them go, or have them pay a different amount than

what the law said, or if he's injured somebody, just let him walk.

Jesus does not actually give any instruction at all to the magistrates here. He describes his disciples, gives them instructions, and they are not magistrates. They're not in the position to be making those kinds of decisions.

The problem here is that to the Jew, popularly, the law which governed the magistrates and their administration of justice was taken as a justification for personal vendettas being redressed by retaliation. And so that if a person injured me, I would feel justified in going back and injuring him. Now, the courts of law should sustain my right to do this.

But there is another possibility, and this would not violate the eye-for-eye, tooth-for-tooth standard for the magistrates, and that is that I don't take him to court. He hurts me in such a way that I could take him to court and hurt him back, but I could also forgive him and not take him to court at all. If he never goes to court, the magistrates never have to do this thing.

The eye-for-eye, tooth-for-tooth is what the courts must follow when they are called upon to redress a grievance between parties. They must do justly. That's what the courts are for.

But in my private dealings with other people, I do not have to require justice in this case. I can surrender my right to justice, and I can be merciful. And we've already mentioned before, mercy is like justice.

It's not the polar opposite of justice. Both mercy and justice are concerned with the rights of another person. Justice means I do not violate his innate rights.

Mercy means I give him rights additional to those that are his innately. If a man knocks my eye out, then what is his by right is to lose his eye. If I say, I won't take you to court, I'll let you keep your eye, I'm giving him a right that he does not innately possess.

He deserves to lose an eye by the strict demands of justice. And I have lost mine. I have the right to retaliation.

But if I say, I will not exercise my right, I will surrender this right. I will take the injury and not inflict further injury. I will give this man the right to keep his eye, although he has forfeited that right.

Mercy, therefore, goes beyond justice, but is not the opposite. It is simply a step beyond. Justice says, I will not knock out that man's eye unjustly, because I have no right to do it, and he has the right to his eyes.

But if he knocks out my eye, and I have the right to take his eye, I will, in mercy, not take my right. I will surrender my rights and let him have further rights that he has already

forfeited for himself. And this is what, of course, the illustrations say that Jesus gives after he says, You've heard an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, but I tell you, don't resist an evil person, whoever slaps you on the right cheek.

By the way, that gives you the right to slap him back, but don't. Give him the other cheek also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, give him more.

Give him your cloak also. Whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him too. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow, do not turn away.

Now, there's four illustrations here of what to do in your personal life. And Jesus' teachings here have principally to do with your personal life. He's not saying that if you are a judge, and someone asked me yesterday whether I think a Christian should be a judge, I think it's very difficult.

I guess my private feeling is being a judge would create a great number of conflicts of interest for a Christian trying to follow the teaching of Jesus. But I leave that to the conscience of each person who is seeking that occupation or in it. I will not condemn it, but I do think that a Christian in the role of a judge is going to have to make some hard calls because of his Christian conscience and because of his duty as a judge.

But that aside, Jesus is assuming that his disciples are not in that role. Now, by the way, his disciples were the leaders of the church, but they were still not in the role of judging court cases per se. In fact, Paul, one of the apostles, not one of the twelve that were here, but another man of the same rank as them, said in 1 Corinthians 5, What do I have to do with judging those who are outside the church? Do you not even judge those who are inside, but those who are outside God judges? In other words, Paul didn't consider he, even though he was as authoritative as any Christian ever was in the body of Christ, he didn't feel like it was his business to sully his hands with getting involved in conflicts of people outside the church.

But he did say, also in 1 Corinthians 6, that if Christians do have conflicts with one another, the ideal thing is to absorb the injury, but if you insist that some kind of rectification of the situation should be done, it should not be done before the courts of law. It should be done in-house. Find a wise brother to arbitrate and to mediate.

We'll maybe say more about that in a moment. But I'm simply saying that I don't know that there's a place, I don't know if judges and law enforcement officers ought to be Christians. I guess everyone ought to be Christians, but I'm not sure that Christians ought to be in those roles.

And that would, if I wanted to get off onto that to defend my statement, it could take us a very long time. And I would do a very thorough job of defending it, but I would not do a very thorough job of covering the material that's before us. So I think I'm going to pass

on that.

All I can say is this, that when Jesus said, do not resist the evil man, if a man strikes you, if someone compels you, if someone wants to sue you, if somebody asks from you, you do not have to insist upon your right of retaliation. You do not need to insist on your right to your freedom and to your possessions. You can surrender these rights to bless that party.

Now, of course, blessing people is usually something you want to do when you like people. But Jesus is describing people who you're not likely to like. If they strike you, if they sue you, if they're asking for your money, this is the kind of persons that typically you don't like to encounter very often.

And yet Jesus is suggesting that you should bless such people. And he says it more plainly in verse 44, bless those who curse you. We'll say more about that in a moment.

But let me talk about these illustrations here he gives. Do not resist the evil person. What does that mean? Is that a separate example or is that part of what follows? Whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also.

The statement, do not resist the evil person, has been thought by many, especially Mennonite types, to mandate a total policy of non-resistance of all evil. Now, I suppose if this is what Jesus was saying, then he is calling upon us to trust God to redress all evils. After all, Paul does tell us in Romans chapter 12, he says, do not avenge yourselves, but give place to God's wrath.

For God has said, vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. So, in a sense, if Jesus was saying there's no sense in which we should resist evil, that we should just, in the presence of all evil, act as if it is not there, turn the other way, act passively, do nothing, then he must be saying that we're supposed to leave all that in God's hands. That we should not take it into our hands, we should leave it in God's hands.

And therefore, a total policy of non-resistance of all forms of evil would be, in a sense, a form of faith, trusting God. And I must say, at a certain level, I respect those who have that faith and who operate in it. And I would have to say also that that was the way I understood this passage for many years.

As I have studied the scripture more and contemplated more what Jesus is saying and many other considerations, I feel that that might be missing the point. Because if we're going to take the statement, do not resist the evil man, as an absolute, not a hyperbole, just a total, literal, don't do any kind of resistance, then it does not specify what kind of resistance, just all resistance is to be forsworn. And yet, preaching the gospel is a form of resisting evil.

Rebuking a sinner is a form of resisting his behavior. Resistance simply means you come

against it and you do something to try to prevent it from continuing. That's resisting it, trying to stop it.

If a sinner is living a life of sin and we preach that he should repent of his sin, we are resisting his life of sin, we're resisting him. We're not doing it physically, but that's adding a word to it. Jesus didn't say, do not physically resist, he said, do not resist.

And therefore, if we're going to take it as an absolute without any modification whatsoever, then any form of attempt to prevent evil from occurring is resisting the evil man and should not be done. Now, I'm not trying to make this ridiculous, I'm trying to say that since that would appear to be ridiculous from other biblical teachings that tell us that we are supposed to stand against evil, we are supposed to speak up against evil, we are supposed to call sinners to repentance. And even Jesus, in some ways, put up resistance.

We might not say physical resistance, although driving many changes from the temple was a physical act. We don't know that he, you know, it's a separate issue whether he struck a person or not, but he was certainly resisting the practice, the evil practice, of the money changers doing their business in the temple. There are forms of resistance that we find that are absolutely appropriate.

The Apostle Paul struck a false prophet blind, verbally, said, you'll be blind. And for a little while, and he was. He was resisting that man in his efforts to dissuade the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, from hearing the gospel.

There are many ways in which resistance of evil is advocated, but there must be some way in which Jesus means that we're not to resist the evil man. I'm just saying we don't just take it as an absolute. There's a need to understand what he is saying and what he's not saying.

Now, I would point out to you that every example Jesus gives where he tells you not to resist, whether it's a lawsuit against yourself, whether it's someone striking you, whether it's someone telling you to carry a load for a mile for him, whether it's somebody asking for your money, all those places that Jesus gives examples of non-resistance, it's always a case where you, your time, your money, your comfort, is at risk. And you, he says, should not resist. Now, the question always arises when someone takes a pacifist view, as I do, toward war, or as I often do, I take a position against self-defense.

People always raise the question, well, what if somebody was about to kill your wife, or rape your daughter, or something like that, what would you do? Would you do nothing? And the answer is, I would certainly not do nothing, I would do something. Because for me to stand by, to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin, and to see the afflicted, it says in Proverbs, deliver those who are condemned to death, you know, are on their way to death, who are innocent. I believe that intervention, in some

form, is good, just like, I believe it's right when there's abortion.

Some of you may not believe in marching in front of, or sitting on the steps of abortion clinics, but I would hope that you would find no reason to resist praying against abortion, that's resisting it. You know, resistance of evil, and the attempt to rescue the innocent from unjust harm, to my mind, is a godly and Christian vocation. There are, no doubt, legitimate and non-legitimate forms of resistance, even in such cases.

But what I'm saying is that Jesus does not give any illustrations in this place, where you are in the position to protect another, but you don't do it. It's always you're in the position to protect yourself, but you don't do it. And we have to consider that the extent of Jesus' teaching about non-resistance has to do with surrendering your rights in order to be loving towards somebody who's unkind toward you.

But not necessarily that there's anything in this teaching that would go against the whole teaching, which is moral in nature, throughout the Old Testament, and which even the righteous instinctively feel in their heart, even if God's law is written in their hearts, everyone instinctively feels you should do something to stop somebody if you see them about ready to kill someone, if you see someone about ready to rob someone, or kill them, or rape somebody. Every righteous heart knows something should be done to stop these people, to stop this act. And this is true even of the most godly Christians.

I cannot imagine a Christian who does not feel compelled in the face of a crime in progress, who does not feel compelled to do something to stop it. But to do something is to resist an evil man. But while some, as I say, I think classically the Anabaptist Mennonites, would say you should not use resistance or violence in any form at all, I think there's possibly going beyond what Jesus is intending here.

Jesus says do not resist the evil man, but every illustration he gives is the evil man who's hurting you. You have the power and the prerogative to surrender your rights and to absorb injury, but I don't know that a Christian or anyone else has the right to surrender his obligation to his fellow man. Now, everything Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount and everywhere else is in one way or another an amplification on the command to love God or to love your brothers yourself.

Certainly, this idea that if a man strikes me, I don't strike him back, I let him strike me again if he wants to, that is an amplification of what it means to love my neighbor. And if Jesus says don't resist the evil man, he obviously means don't resist that evil man when it is the most loving thing to do, is not resisting. Whatever you are to do, you're supposed to do out of love.

And yet there are some forms of resistance that love requires. In the Old Testament, we are told several times in Proverbs that the person who does not discipline a child, the parent that does not discipline a child does not love that child, hates that child, is doing

harm to that child. Yet, what is discipline but resisting a child's evil behavior, reshaping it, recognizing a child is involved in self-destructive behavior that will hurt other people and hurt itself, possibly with the law, certainly with God, and say, no, I will not allow you to do this damage to yourself and to others.

Now, of course, we can say a parent has the responsibility for children, but the citizen does not necessarily have responsibility for the behavior of criminals. And that may be true or it may not be true. I don't know how that can be determined for sure.

If I see my child about to hit my other child on the head with a hammer, I feel absolutely compelled to stop that from happening. If I see a person who is not my child about to hit someone else who is not my child on the head with a hammer, I don't see the difference. If it is I and no one else in the position to prevent a crime or an injury, an unjust injury from occurring, I don't see how morally I am in a different position than if it were my child.

It is true, I have an innate right that no one can dispute for my child's behavior. But the big problem with Cain that we often hear is that he said, Am I my brother's keeper? As if he was not. Now, Cain was in fact not his brother's keeper in the sense that Adam and Eve, their parents, were the keeper of their children.

But in the sense that they were persons living on the same planet, in a very small society at that time, but still what society there was, they were co-citizens in it, brethren, neighbors. It was not appropriate for him to deny that he had a responsibility for his brother's keeping. We are all our brother's keepers to a certain extent.

And to say I love my neighbor and I love my enemy even, as Jesus says to do, does not mean that I have to love my enemy more than I love my neighbor. If my neighbor is an innocent victim and the enemy is a person who is inflicting unjust injuries on an innocent victim, my love for my enemy is not necessarily supposed to preclude and override my love for my neighbor. Now, love for neighbor, what does that require? Well, the story Jesus told about the good Samaritan is a good example.

You find a person in trouble, you help them. Now, we don't have in the story the Samaritan didn't come along while the man was being beat up. And we might speculate as to how Jesus might have run the storyline if that Samaritan had showed up while the thieves were beating him up.

But my suspicion is that had the story included that feature, that the Samaritan would not have just stood by and waited for the guy to be beaten half to death and then said, okay, now I'll help you out. In all likelihood, given the whole character and nature of Hebrew heroism, judging from people like David and Jonathan and Saul and so forth, that Samaritan no doubt would have come to his aid. I mean, I say no doubt.

Perhaps someone could entertain doubts about that, but I don't think so. I think if the hero had shown up on the scene while the crime was in progress, he would have done what he could to intervene and stop the crime from occurring. Anger at oppressors is not ungodly.

We read of Saul in the Old Testament that there was a city, I think it was in Gibeah, where enemies came and surrounded him and said, we will only let you live if you will let us pluck out your right eyes. And the people of the city said, well, give us some time to think about this. And they sent messengers down throughout all the land to see if they could get any assistance.

And when Saul, who was plowing, I think, at the time, heard the news, it says the Spirit of God came upon him and he was angry. And he marshaled a force of resistance against these oppressors. Now, I am a pacifist with reference to war.

I might be a provisional pacifist depending on certain circumstances because I don't think, I'll tell you what, let me just say this. It is common either to be a total pacifist against all forms of violence and resistance or else to kind of not be a pacifist at all and just be, you know, just say, well, we should do whatever we have to do to stop bad guys, whoever they may be. I mean, those are the two extremes that most people gravitate toward.

They either just say, sure, if there's a war, those are the bad guys, we should go kill them, go bomb their cities, go free their country, you know, free their victims and so forth. There's those who just assume that without ever even raising the ethical questions about whether this conflict ought to be fought and whether it ought to be fought in this way. And there are those who object to that and swing the other way and say all violence, all resistance is bad.

Human beings are a species that tend toward extremes. And really, it seems to me that following Jesus Christ means that we look for the issues of justice and mercy and faithfulness. What is love? And say, okay, in this circumstance, what is the loving thing to do? It's not, you will not find a place in the New Testament where the Bible says, do go to war or don't go to war.

In fact, the issue of going to war is not directly addressed in any of the moral teachings of the New Testament. Therefore, the decision about whether a Christian should go to war will not be decided by some teaching of the scripture in the New Testament on the subject of war. It will have to be assessing whether this particular war falls under these biblical teachings or under these biblical teachings.

Whether my involvement in this war is governed by this teaching of Jesus or this teaching of Jesus or whatever, my involvement or non-involvement. It's not so simple as just say that all war is wrong. Some wars accomplish good things.

It's still a question of whether Christians should participate or not. But I'm willing to say that there might even be some situations. I don't know what they are.

But because the Bible doesn't for sure say that there aren't any such situations, there might be some situations where a Christian might even justly participate in some form of a war-like thing. But I say that very cautiously because I don't know of any wars that I would approve of a Christian fighting it. There are perhaps wars I could imagine that were 100% defensive and where all the acts of defense on the part of the Christian were for the sake of their families and innocent parties and not selfishly motivated.

I don't know of any wars like that. I don't know if there ever would be a war like that. I'm just saying in principle, I'm a pacifist because of what wars are.

If wars were of another sort, there might be some conceivable imaginary war that I would not oppose because the Bible doesn't say, thou shalt not go to war, thou shalt not go to war. But it does say, you shall love your enemy, you shall love your neighbor. And those obligations of love are what dictate Christian behavior in all circumstances.

And so, if I see somebody being mugged, I don't care if it's, you know, everyone says, what if your wife is being killed or your daughter is being raped, why does it have to be my daughter or my wife? They use that because they hope that they'll strike a chord that I can't possibly back down and say, oh well, of course I depend on them, because they want me to admit that I would use violence or resistance against evil in some circumstances. Well, you don't have to make it my wife or my daughter. Make it somebody else's wife or daughter or husband or child.

You know, if there's an innocent party suffering violence unjustly, and I am the only person there or one of the few who is capable of intervening, then of course, of course I would intervene. Now, there are limits to what I think would be correct intervention. It's not to be assumed that just because we've now agreed that intervention and resistance of evil is sometimes, maybe once in a while, even called for by love, it doesn't mean that every form of resistance and shooting the guy dead is the right thing to do.

Some people just want to wait for that one concession. Yes, there are times when we should resist evil and say, good, I got my Uzi, you know. That's not necessarily, it doesn't follow.

What follows is that Jesus is saying, it is possible for you, even in a land where the courts were totally just and would exact just penalties against every aggressor and every oppressor, it is possible for you, if you are the victim, to, out of love, surrender your rights to vindication, surrender your rights to defense, and absorb injury out of mercy to your oppressor. The issue of non-resistance of a man who is hurting somebody else is a separate issue, and as far as I can tell, is not addressed in this passage. It may not be unaddressed biblically, but it's not, in my opinion, addressed in this passage.

A set of circumstances Jesus is describing. You are the victim. As near as we can tell in these illustrations, you and you alone are the victim.

And the issues of whether you should and how you should or should not defend others and resist evil, whether you do it simply by word, whether you do it by prayer, whether you do it by baseball bat, or whether you do it by a .357 Magnum. Those separate options can be discussed separately, but I don't think that they are relevant to this passage. The reason I say all this is because so many people do think so.

So many people just take this passage and make it Jesus' statement about all forms of resistance of evil. And as I pointed out earlier, Jesus uses a great number of absolute-sounding statements, which when compared with his conduct in teaching elsewhere, clearly have cases where they're not absolute. Even when he says in verse 42, Give to him who asks you, he doesn't say any exceptions.

But certainly there are times when you cannot or should not give certain things to people who are asking you for them. But the point he is making is, you should not hold on to your rights to the point that you care more about you possessing your money than this beggar. You should not care more for your rights than you care about the soldier who needs his equipment carried for a mile or two.

You should not care more for your rights than you do for the person who is suing you or attacking you. You should care for him. You should be concerned about others, even if they're bad people.

If you absorb injury rather than re-inflict it, you are being Christ-like. Jesus did that too. But it doesn't mean that Jesus in no sense resisted evil in any way.

Jesus came here as a great mighty warrior against the forces of evil. And his words, and many times his actions, were calculated to prevent or to forestall some evil behavior from recurring or continuing. Now, I say that because of this statement, do not resist the evil man.

It could be certainly, if it is absolute, extended to forms of behavior and social conduct that it probably is not intended by Jesus to be applied to. What it is to be applied to is you suffering at the hands of another person. You can suffer.

Now, how much should you suffer? It says in verse 39, Whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. Now, in the older King James, I think it said, whoever strikes you or smites you. It's either smite or strike.

I forget which. But smite and strike are not as explicit as slap. What's it? Is it smite? Smite, okay, yeah.

The King James says, whoever smites you. The New King James says, whoever slaps you.

Now, certainly slap conveys a slightly different image to me anyway.

Growing up on the King James version, and reading whoever smites you on the cheek, I always figured if anyone smites me on the cheek, it's probably going to be with their knuckles. It's probably going to be, they're going to be punching me. And a person who would punch me is probably planning to fight me, you know, intends to beat me up.

He might even be murderous. You know, from the movies, you know, when someone gets punched across the jawbone, it's not usually an isolated thing. It's usually followed up by a complete battering.

Sometimes leaving a person half dead or even dead. And because of that wording, and the mental picture that came from, if someone strikes you or smites you on the cheek, and picturing that as a blow from an aggressive, hostile, violent person who wants to damage you seriously, and Jesus saying, go ahead and turn the other cheek, I certainly got the impression that no matter what a person does to you, even if it's extremely, even if they're going to break your bones and maybe kill you, you should do nothing to resist. You should just stand there and take it.

Now, to my mind, that is possibly a very virtuous thing to do. And I have only been hit once in my life by a hostile party. When I was standing up for Jesus and a person hated what I was doing, he came up and he punched me, and I turned the other cheek and he didn't punch me again, to my surprise.

And so, I mean, I was glad I did that. I felt like I did the right thing. And I didn't sustain any, you know, serious injury or pain as a result of his first blow.

So, I mean, that was just, that happened and it was over, and now I have a story to tell about it. But I used to kind of object to those who would say, well, he's not talking about people who are hitting you like to hurt you. He's talking about people who would slap you.

And then the new King James actually comes out and renders it slap shoot. I used to find that to be kind of a watering it down and, you know, just kind of wimping out on the deal. But I have to say in all honesty, the concept of slapping probably is indeed what Jesus has in mind here.

Now, a slap is more of an insult than an injury. When someone slaps someone else, they're not trying to knock them out. They're not trying to break their jaw.

They're not trying to do anything that would do permanent harm. They're trying to show violent disapproval and shame a person, especially in a Hebrew or Middle Eastern culture, to touch someone on the face is the ultimate insult. To slap them across the face or spit in their face was about getting as bad as it could get.

Jesus is probably here talking more about a situation where someone is trying to aggravate you or humiliate you or shame you or insult you than somebody who's trying to damage you. Now, let me say this. Even if all this is true, even if Jesus is only talking about a slap, it does not necessarily mean he would not say the same thing about a blow.

He might say the same thing about a blow, but the question is, what is he talking about in this passage? And the reason that I would come around largely to agree with the translators who understand the smiting here to be a slap rather than a fist is because Jesus says, whoever smites you or slaps you on the right cheek Now, if you're facing an aggressor, your right cheek is facing his left hand. And if that person is going to fight you, certainly, probably nine times out of ten, he's going to be a right-handed person, and he's going to strike with his right hand. And the most natural place that he would hit you if he struck with his right hand would be your left cheek.

Now, of course, Jesus could be picturing one of those rare situations where the guy's left-handed and he's striking you on the right cheek with his left hand. But it is generally understood that most people are right-handed, and in the illustration, that's probably to be assumed. Now, if a person is right-handed facing you, in order to strike you on the right cheek, and Jesus specifies the right cheek, he doesn't just say one cheek, he says the right cheek, that is more likely to be the back of his right hand coming against you this way, against your right cheek.

And therefore, it seems, although it cannot be said for certain, but it seems that Jesus is envisaging a person hitting you at the back of his hand, a crosswise, not straight on with a fist, but a crosswise, swinging his hand back across his body length, his right hand hitting your right cheek. And that is exactly why the word slaps. That's the rationale for retranslating it from smites to slaps here in the New King James.

And I must confess, it's probably correct. You can assess the argument yourself, and if you don't think it's valid, you don't have to follow it. But personally, I've come around to have to admit that I think that probably is what Jesus has in mind.

Now, what he would be saying in that instance is, if someone slaps you across the face, unprovoked, you've got every right to slap him across the face, but why bother? You don't have to. If you took him to court, if a policeman was there and intervened, the judgment would be that he gets a slap across his face because he gave you a slap. But what you can do instead is don't take him to court, don't call the cops, go ahead.

If he gets his jolly slapping innocent people across the face, give him the other cheek. Let him do it twice. Double his pleasure.

Double his fun. You know, I mean, you can do that. You can endure a few slaps.

It's humiliating, but hey, humble yourself. There's a really moving scene in the old movie. I think it's an old black and white movie, but powerful.

If you haven't seen it, you should. To Kill a Mockingbird. How many of you have seen that movie? It's a very powerful, inspiring movie.

But there's a scene where an old drunkard who's really just about the scummiest person you could imagine, and he's beat up his daughter and he accused a black man of it, doing it, of raping her, and the black man got himself condemned in court and shot, though he was innocent and so forth, because this guy, and the guy's just an old drunkard. But he's angry at the lawyer who's the star of the show, Atticus Finch, who defended the black man in court. And there's one scene where this old guy, who's not anywhere near as big as Atticus, he's just a weasely, sleazy, little, crummy man.

And he walks up, he's drunk, and he doesn't have much sense about him. And he walks right up to Atticus Finch and stares him in the face and spits in his face. Now, from watching the movie, Atticus Finch is the picture of self-control and civility and kindness and wisdom and stuff.

He's like the quintessential good guy, played by Gregory Peck in the movie. And Gregory Peck's much larger than the actor who played this sleazebag. And so, by this time in the movie, you hate this drunkard, because he's caused the death of an innocent black man.

He's a child-beater, he's a drunkard, he's in all points undesirable. Later in the movie, he tries to kill Atticus's children. And so he's just a real bad guy.

And by this time in the movie, everyone knows that Atticus Finch is the ideal man. And here this total worm of a human being comes up and spits in his face. And you see Atticus Finch's jaw tenses and he stiffens up.

You just want him to take the guy down and maybe kill him. But Atticus Finch, he just stands there for a few seconds and he pulls a handkerchief out of his pocket and wipes the spit off his face and just walks by him. It's just very powerful.

Because it shows such self-control. Hardly anyone watching the movie wants him to do that. Everyone wants him to beat the guy up and you'd imagine if he was the real person, he'd want to beat the guy up too, because he could.

But he's under control. This is what meekness is. Jesus said, Blessed are the meek.

They shall inherit the earth. They don't press their rights. They don't press their options.

They're in one sense above that. You shouldn't think that way, perhaps, because then you'll start feeling arrogant about being meek. But there's a sense in which you're above that.

You don't have to react that way. If somebody is a jerk, you don't have to be a jerk back. You can be more like Jesus.

You can be humble. And in doing so, of course, you show yourself to be the better person, even if you're not thinking in those terms, well, I'm going to be the better person than him. But just being like Jesus, just being humble and taking it.

Jesus got spat on. And when he was reviled, he reviled not again. And when he suffered, he didn't threaten.

So, Jesus is saying, Be merciful. If someone gives you cause to retaliate, you don't have to retaliate. Don't repay evil with evil, but repay evil with good, said Paul.

And he was actually talking about this section of the Sermon on the Mount, I'm convinced, in Romans 12, where Paul said these things. Romans 12, verse 17, Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath. For it is written, Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, says the Lord.

Therefore, if your enemy hungers, feed him. If your enemy thirsts, give him drink. For so doing, you will heap coals of fire on his head.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. And this is Paul's commentary, I believe, on this section of the Sermon on the Mount. Mercy goes beyond justice.

Justice says you will not injure another person. Mercy says you will not injure him even if he's injured you. Even if he deserves to be injured by you.

You will not do it. You extend mercy, and that's part of love. That's part of loving an unlikable person.

Now, I've made a great point of saying that Jesus' illustration here probably pictures a slap, not an injurious or a life-threatening blow. But the question naturally arises, how far are we supposed to take this? If someone slaps us on one cheek and we don't resist them, what if they do it with their knuckles? What if they do it with a baseball bat? What if they do it with a gun? What are we supposed to do? I mean, Jesus only gives an example about a very non-life-threatening situation. How far does He want us to take this principle into more and more dangerous scenarios? Well, we may have an answer to that in James, who also, as I've commented before, James is a commentary, I believe, on the Sermon on the Mount, quoting the Sermon on the Mount more times per chapter than any other book of the Bible.

In James 5, he is rebuking the rich who have oppressed the poor. And he says to those

rich people, in James 5, 6, you have condemned, you have murdered the just, the righteous one. And it says, he does not resist you.

Now, there have been various ways that people have understood this. The NIV has actually re-translated it in a way that no other translation does. And I don't appreciate their doing so.

The NIV translators have them saying, you have condemned and killed or murdered the just or the righteous. It says, and he was not opposing you. It actually puts it in the past tense.

He was not opposing you. Meaning, you have done bad things to a man who was not already doing bad things to you. He was not opposing you.

Why did you pick on him? Is the way the NIV renders it. But that makes it, that of course makes James tell us nothing about how the righteous man reacts to being condemned and murdered. The way the NIV renders it, it only tells us that this righteous man did not bring such behavior upon himself by his own actions.

But it does not tell us in that case what the righteous man did when attacked. However, suffice to say, the NIV I believe has no basis for translating it that way. There is no past tense there in that sentence.

It is not, he was not opposing you. It is, as all other translations demonstrate and as an interlinear point out, he does not resist you. You have condemned and killed the poor or the just, and he does not resist you.

Now, he does not resist you sounds like he's a practitioner of non-resistance. And Jesus said, do not resist the evil man. Certainly here's a case where a just man is being opposed by an evil man and he does not resist.

How bad is the exploitation? How bad is the oppression? Well, he's been condemned and killed. Murdered. Now, it's not clear exactly what form of murder this was taking.

It's not likely that the rich men in question were outright going out slaughtering righteous people. They might have been. I mean, James was not at the time riding during Nero's persecution probably nor one of these others where Christians were being wholesale wiped out for their faith.

The context actually suggests that there were rich men who did persecute individual Christians. It says that back in chapter 2 of James. It says in verse 6, James 2, 6, But you have dishonored the poor man.

Do not rich men oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you were called? So, the rich men, some rich men were

blaspheming Christ and calling Christians before the courts. We don't know if they were calling them before the courts because they were Christians or not. Probably.

But it could be argued then that these righteous ones who are thus murdered by the rich and do not resist, these are Christians who are on trial for their faith. On trial because they are persecuted for righteousness sake. And they do not resist very possibly because Jesus said blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness sake.

Leap for joy at that time. And the non-resistance of these poor or of these righteous in James 5, 6 definitely is a non-resistance in the face of a life-threatening situation. But it may stand in class by itself.

It may be that they are not resisting persecution. I have at least heard some people suggest, I don't know if they are right or not, that even if it is wrong or if it is right to defend yourself against a mugger, it would be wrong to defend yourself against persecution. Because, well, I guess the example of Jesus and the apostles would be given.

The apostles were often persecuted but you never find them taking up arms you never see them organizing those thousands of Christians in Jerusalem who were under their teaching. They organized them into a militia to defend Peter when he was put into jail or James who was beheaded or Paul when there were threats on his life. They just sent Paul out of town.

They were always avoiding conflicts. And when conflicts came, they didn't resist forcibly. Now, there might be any number of reasons to be suggested why that was.

But the point is, we never find a case of at least violent resistance on the part of Christians to persecution in the Bible. You do find sometimes forms of verbal resistance. Jesus said to his disciples, I think it was in the 10th chapter of Matthew, when he was sending them out two by two.

If you turn to Matthew 10, we can get sort of Jesus teaching on this. It says in Matthew 10, 16, Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

Certainly harmless as doves sounds like you're not going to be doing any physical harm to anyone. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. And you will be brought before governors and kings for my sake as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

So your concern when you're brought on trial for your faith is not to defend yourself, but to be a testimony to Jesus. You're brought there, Jesus brought you there for a testimony. And notice when Stephen was brought on trial, he had a chance to defend himself.

He didn't defend himself one bit. He just gave a sermon. Stephen's so-called defense in Acts chapter 7 is from beginning to end a salvation sermon and a rebuke of his oppressors, but he does not say anything in his own defense there.

But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child. And children will rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. Now here's a deadly situation, mortal danger.

People being betrayed to death by their own family members and so forth. And you'll be hated by all for my name's sake, but he who endures the end shall be saved. Not he who's the last man standing, but he who remains faithful to death.

But when they persecute you in one city or in this city, flee to another. For surely I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. And he goes on and talks more about this kind of thing.

Now, Jesus said you're going to be persecuted. They'll deliver you up to the courts. Some of you will die.

What should you do? Well, he certainly doesn't say fight. Although in many cases the Christians were so numerous that fighting might have conferred victory. He does not ever suggest that fighting is a proper response to persecution.

Fleeing is, when they persecute you in this city, flee to another, he said. It is not illegitimate to flee. And that is, by the way, different than turning the other cheek.

Unless you're turning your other cheeks, you know, as it were. But I don't think that's what he had in mind. But, sorry about that.

That's another way to turn the other cheek. But, you know, when Jesus said to turn the other cheek if they strike you, it's obvious he's not addressing every situation in an exact way. It's, again, a hyperbole.

I mean, certainly there are times when it's the literal thing to do. I don't think there's one thing wrong with literally turning the other cheek. In fact, it's probably the right thing to do in most cases where someone strikes you.

But to turn and run is also authorized. And that's different than turning the other cheek, which tells us that Jesus' instructions about turning the other cheek do not encompass every option. They are an illustration of showing mercy rather than exacting retribution on somebody who attacks you.

It's an illustration. It is not the only option. Fleeing is another.

And when you are brought before magistrates, even on trial for your life, don't premeditate a defense for yourself. Why? Because you'll be thinking of all the ways to defend yourself if you do that. But just let the Holy Spirit give you words at that time, and He'll give you a testimony like He did to Stephen.

You might die, but what the Holy Spirit gives you to speak might not be in the form of a defense at all of your actions, which is why you shouldn't premeditate what to say, because no doubt whatever you would think up would be more self-defensive. But let the Holy Spirit give you anointed words of testimony in that hour, and then you will fulfill your purpose in martyrdom. Now, what I'm trying to say is this, that there are times when Christians, most of the time, all the time really, I think Christians should be prepared to die rather than hurt other people.

I think Christians should be prepared to suffer humiliation rather than to inflict humiliation. This is what merciful character is about. But, Jesus, as I said earlier, does not address the question of whether using some kind of physical restraint or some other kind of restraint is legitimate in other situations where you are not the victim or the sole intended victim.

You see, in principle, I do not believe in self-defense, if by self-defense means I have to hurt somebody to avoid getting hurt. I do believe in self-defense in the sense that if I see danger coming, I don't mind hiding or running. A wise man does that.

It is not wrong to hide or to run from danger. Furthermore, I could easily believe in self-defense if it meant that the person is not just coming after me, it's the people standing behind me he's really after. And taking me down is just his access to those helpless people, my children or whoever.

In that case, defense of myself could conceivably fall into an entirely different set of principles than what Jesus is describing here. Because defense of self would be in that case, at least potentially, only God would know a man's heart, I suppose, but could potentially be entirely unselfish. I might be willing to die, but I'm not so willing to just drop dead and let these other people who depend on me stand vulnerable unless I know God wants me to do that.

Yes. I think that being raped is a much more severe act of violence than being slapped, obviously. And I personally do not believe that a woman is obligated to simply be passive in the face of rape.

It would be very hard to know because different situations are different. In some cases, by struggling, a woman might be able to get away, might be able to prevent the rape from occurring because she just has certain advantages in the situation, perhaps. Maybe

she's got some pepper spray, or maybe she's got long fingernails, or maybe she's bigger than the guy or something like that.

I mean, there are situations where resistance might prevent the rape and where resistance, I believe, would be appropriate, but there would be also situations where resistance might not be even possibly successful, might just aggravate the violence or whatever, and where a woman might indeed decide that non-resistance is what she must do. That's a very hard thing for me to know. But I would say this.

I would not in any way condemn a woman who is a victim of rape, whether she chose a resistance reaction or a non-resistance reaction. I figure that in that kind of a terrifying situation, unless God gives unusual grace and presence of mind, which I believe he could with a Christian woman, but apart from that, that a woman is likely to react however almost viscerally. I mean, it's not going to very often be having a calculated, rational response.

I think that a woman will probably resist if she thinks there's a possibility and possibly just be non-resistant if she feels like that's the only way to survive the situation. I don't know. But frankly, I don't believe that Jesus' teaching here takes in that particular thing, and therefore I would say common sense and concern not to damage another person beyond what is necessary would dictate.

Now, when I say that, it might sound like I'm acknowledging some major scenario that could occur and does occur to many people to be unaddressed ethically in the Scripture. And I'm not saying it's unaddressed. I'm just saying that it's the kind of thing where different circumstances strike me as love, which is what Christians are always supposed to do, even of their enemies, would require various things.

It is not the case that if you're being raped that your love for your enemy would mean that you're going to let him rape you. My children would love to do lots of things that I don't let them do out of love for them. And also there's my love for God.

If my children wanted to burn all the Bibles in the house, I would not permit that to be done. I would physically restrain them, not because I have some superstitious notion about Bibles, but because it would be, to my mind, an act of hostility against God and so forth. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and to be raped is to be, in some measure, defiled.

Not that your spirit has to be defiled by it, but for you to say, I will not allow this to happen, to this. I'm going to restrain it in every way I can for the glory of God. I'm going to drive the money changers out of this temple.

I can see there being a valid thing there. My concern, obviously I'm not speaking very boldly on this, my concern about it is that I'm not sure that there's just one thing that

answers that question for all time. But I would personally say, and I also want to make sure that I don't just give some kind of scriptural sanction for what anyone would want to do naturally anyway, because what we want to do naturally often is carnal and wrong.

Sometimes our most fleshly spontaneous reactions are the wrong thing. And certainly a woman would want to defend herself from that. And I'm inclined to give her permission biblically.

I think she probably should, unless it's a situation where she knows that there's no hope for it, in which case I don't think she bears any guilt if she allows herself to be raped in that case. I mean, if she feels that fighting is just going to get her killed and not going to prevent the crime from occurring. This always, or it doesn't always come up, but frequently does come up.

And as I said, if the Bible, if Jesus in saying, do not resist the evil man, if that was an absolute statement that had no qualifications and it was a total statement of every scenario, then of course we'd have to say that even a woman being raped could do nothing to resist. But I personally do not believe that Jesus' words take into consideration that particular thing. And I think that where Jesus has not put special restriction on what we would naturally know to do, that what we naturally know to do as godly people is to be trusted.

I mean, there's a sense... See, here's the thing, we're going to have to wind this down, but what so many people want to do with the Bible and with the Sermon on the Mount is make a list of rules. In this situation you do this, in this situation you do that, in this situation you do this. And it's our legalism of... it's the legalism of our inherent nature to want to have everything mimeographed in advance, a list of all circumstances of what you do.

Then you don't have to think for yourself and you certainly don't have to walk in the Spirit. You don't have to get any guidance from God. You've got it all written down.

All you have to know is what page it's on. And I don't believe that the Christian life is that way. I don't believe that God has in the Bible just given us a list of rules.

I believe that God has given us a revelation of His heart, which is that we should love our neighbor as ourselves, even our unlikeable neighbors, even hostile neighbors, even enemies, we should love them as we love ourselves. And that we should love God with all our heart, soul, mind, strength. And all the things that we find else are simply given as amplification, example, case histories and so forth of that principle.

So that, you know, it would be nice if we said, okay, Jesus said don't resist the evil person, but I wish he'd give me a list of all the exceptions. Well, I think that He doesn't have to do that. I believe that the law is written on your heart.

And what that means is that if you're walking in the Spirit and if you're being raped, you ought to hope that you're walking in the Spirit. Or if you're suffering any other kind of act of violence, you ought to hope that you're walking in the Spirit at that time. You need it more than ever.

Then I would trust you as a spiritual person to know at that moment what to do. Maybe it's a little bit like when Jesus said when they bring you up, premeditate in your heart that you won't think in advance what you'll say. Let the Holy Spirit give you the words in that hour.

Maybe that's the kind of thing He would say if one of the women in His audience came up to Him and said, well, what if I'm being raped? What do I do then? He might well say, well, let the Spirit give you wisdom in that hour, what to do. Jesus doesn't have to enumerate every situation. And the reason is, of course, that when you say rape or murder or theft, not every rape is the same.

I mean, there are factors that might make it possible to escape or not escape in different situations. You just kind of have to be led by the Spirit a lot of the time. What Jesus is teaching is principle.

He gives specific scenarios as illustrations of that principle. But that's just so that it kind of fleshes out the principle. But it's the principle of love and walking in the Spirit of God and being Christ-like that we're supposed to be observing all the time.

These examples give us some clues as how that works out in certain kinds of situations. But they don't address every situation. We still have to have God.

We still have to have the Holy Spirit. We still have to be loving. And we still have to take responsibility for thinking for ourselves sometimes.

Because I think that that's just part of Christian living. Good question. Hard to give a black-and-white answer on it.

Now, let me just say quickly as we wind this down. We've got a few minutes here. We're going to get down to verse 42 and then we'll take a break.

We've been talking all this time about resisting the evil man in the form of someone who strikes you. And I guess the main thing I've been trying to point out is that the specific illustration is not necessarily of a criminal act, of violence. It might well be a neighbor or a friend or a business associate or someone who's angry at you and wants to insult you or a rival from another company or something, and they do some insulting thing to you.

It might not be that they strike you physically. In that culture, to insult someone might be to strike them. In our culture, it might be just to slander them or do something like that.

But there is such a thing as just turning the other cheek, as it were, and saying, well, I could turn around and start slandering him. Now, I don't think there's anything wrong with setting the record straight if someone misrepresents you and says that you said this and you know you didn't. But you wouldn't want to turn around and start inflicting similar slander against him.

That's the point. And to absorb the humiliation and the insult as well as injury is what is obviously implied here. But the question of response to criminal violence is not specifically addressed here.

It is obvious that in some measure the principles here would apply to other scenarios, even cases of maybe mortal violence. But it is not a given that he's discussing that issue here or that there'd be no other considerations in such a case as that. That requires more in-depth ethical consideration from all parts of Scripture, I think.

Now, he says, if anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. In my opinion, this is a hyperbole, but it can be done literally too. I don't believe that everyone that... if someone wants to sue you for a million dollars, you might not just be able to say, okay, I'll give you two million.

I mean, that may not be within your power. These days, people don't sue you for your coat. They sue you for whatever they think your insurance company will cover.

Hopefully millions. And to take this in an absolute literal sense would not always be possible, nor in my opinion would it always be what Jesus is really requiring. What he's saying is this.

Someone wants to sue you, generally speaking, we want to defend our property. And in a sense, if he's suing you because you've really wronged him, you should be glad to give him the property and more. Give him your cloak also.

If he's suing you even though you haven't wronged him, he doesn't deserve it, you still can be magnanimous. You can still be merciful. You can still say, well, I'm going to get a good lawyer.

I'm going to defend my property. And I'm not going to let you get one thing from me. Well, Jesus says you can also just surrender it.

I mean, you're not living for property. He is. The man who's greedy and wants your things, he's obviously a materialist.

You shouldn't be. You can be happy without those things, believe it or not. Unfortunately, we're so materialistic in our culture, even as Christians, that sometimes we don't believe we can be happy and serve God and be all that God wants us to be without the cushion of material things.

But I will testify to you that I have lived sometimes without so much as a penny to my name. And not knowing... Well, I've never gotten below one penny. I've gotten below two pennies though.

As far as I recall, I've always had at least one penny. But there were times I didn't have two. And didn't know where any others were coming from.

And I had a family. But I'm saying that God... And God plus nothing is enough. And of course, if there's anything else needed, He will supply it.

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you. Rather than promote ill will between you and another person who's already hostile toward you because he's suing you, win him. Do not repay evil with evil, but repay evil with good.

Win him. Overcome evil with good, Paul said. And so, the idea is to show the mercy of God.

Why? God does this kind of thing. God gives His enemies more than what they deserve, better. And so, there's various situations where you might express surprising magnanimity toward somebody who's being hostile toward you.

If he slaps you, if he sues you. Go overboard. Now, Jesus, I personally think, is using hyperbole in the sense that I don't know that you literally need to turn the other cheek.

That would be almost making a statement sometimes that might be taken as arrogance. But what He is certainly saying is that your heart should be, first of all, not to retaliate. Secondly, to sustain additional injuries if necessary.

If it's going to give him his jollies, if it's going to make his day to injure you, well, then you should love that person enough that you would, if that would really bless him, let him be blessed at your expense. Of course, it does not follow that every time someone strikes you or wants to sue you, that you would necessarily be blessing them by just complying. The idea, however, is to not press your rights.

His third example is whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. This is, of course, the Roman law that a Roman soldier, often having much equipment to carry, could press into service any civilian standing around to carry his equipment, but he could only do it for one mile. That was the law.

If he had to carry it more than one mile, then he'd have to get a second civilian to carry it the second mile. He could not require a civilian to carry it more than one. Well, Jesus said if a man makes you carry his stuff, makes you go with him one mile, voluntarily go two miles.

Save him the trouble and save some other civilian the trouble of being pressed into service. Assuming you've got the time, go further than is required. Now, you are required to go the one.

You're not being merciful if you go one mile. That's just duty, but you can go two. You can go beyond duty and likewise give to him that asks you and wants to borrow from you.

Now, there are qualifications and exceptions to this that can be found in Scripture, but the point is you should not have a tight fist toward your right to your money or your time or your convenience or your comfort. All these things that motivate the carnal person, which they are so possessive of and defensive of, you should not be defensive of. When somebody wants to resist you and harm you and take something from you, you should love that person more than you love the thing they're trying to take.

Your time or your convenience or your comfort or your money. You should love them more than you love the things that they want from you. And you should be willing to surrender them.

There might be indeed situations where this exact form of reaction would not be the appropriate one. Where running would be better than standing and taking another blow. Where not giving the exact thing that the beggar wants is better for him than giving the thing he's asking for or the child wants or someone else wants.

There are times when the form of behavior will not be exactly according to the examples he gives. But the examples all have one thing in common. They're trying to show that we are to be merciful and to surrender our rights whenever that will bless another.

We've got to stop at this point, I see, by the clock, but we will come back and finish up the last example in our next session.