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(unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp)



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Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER
THINGS**

are true

are noble

are just

are pure

are lovely

are of good report

IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

*When people are enraged, they have little regard for words which they utter, and care little how they may be regarded by God. When people attached themselves to a sect or a party, in religion or politics, and they have no good arguments to employ, they attempt to overwhelm their adversaries by bitter and reproachful words. People in the heat of strife, and in professed zeal for special doctrines, more frequently utter blasphemy than they are aware (Albert Barnes, **Notes on the New Testament**, comment on Acts 13:45).*

*A good man condemns his evil neighbor by his righteous living. It is not necessary for him to speak a single word of outright condemnation (Daniel H. King, **Truth Commentaries: The Book of Hebrews**. 372 [comment on Hebrews 11:7]).*

What Is "Lawlessness"?

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

In a well-known New Testament passage, Christ addresses a misconception that many had in that day which is also held by many today.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord,

*did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; **Depart from Me, You Who Practice Lawlessness**” (Matthew 7:21-23)*

The popular appeal made by many preachers is “Just accept Christ into your heart, and you will be saved.” While “accepting Jesus” is good, there is more to salvation than that. Christ points out that obedience/doing the will of the Father is also necessary. Many do not like the idea of “obedience”. They just want to do what “feels good.”

So, just what does it mean to “do the will of the Father”? My wife and I have a will – our “Last Will and Testament.” Upon our death, whatever possessions we have will be given to our children. We can put any conditions in the will that we want. That is our prerogative. Thus, if our children want to inherit, they must meet the terms of the will.

Our Heavenly Father has also prepared an inheritance for us, which is far greater than treasures of silver and gold. And he has written his “Last Will and Testament.” It is called “The Bible.” That’s where we must go to learn the terms of the will.

Now, in the aforementioned text, Christ mentions people who will be surprised when they are denied entrance into heaven. They may argue that they have done many good deeds, and they even called him “Lord.” So ... what’s the problem?

The problem is that they were doing “good things” for which they had no authority. They were committing “lawlessness.” Other translations may use “iniquity” or “workers of evil.”

The original Greek word is “anomia.” It is derived from “nomos – law.” The Greeks did the same as we do in English with certain words. If we want to make a word negative, we may put “un” in front of it. “Healthy” becomes “unhealthy.” “Lawful” becomes “unlawful.” Thus, when we see a sign that says “It is unlawful to smoke here” we understand what that means. We have no authority to smoke there. The Greeks put the alpha, an “a” in front of “nomos,” and “lawful” became “anomia,” “unlawful” or “lawless.”

Going back to Matthew 7, it is clear that Christ is telling those on judgment day that while they were doing things that seemed good to them, they were doing things for which they had no authority – unlawful or lawless things.

Consider an example. Some years ago I had a Bible study with a young woman from a denomination where they used potato chips and Coke for the Lord’s Supper. They called upon the Lord and did what seemed good to them. But it was “lawlessness” and was “without authority.”

Among the many places in the New Testament where the matter of authority is mentioned is Colossians 3:17: *“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”* We understand what “in the name of” means – it means “by the authority of.” When a policeman knocks on your door and says, “Open up in the name of the law,” he is claiming that he is acting with authority. So Paul writes to the Colossian church, instructing them that “in word” (their teaching) and “deed,” they are to do these things “in the name of the Lord Jesus” – by his authority.

Many churches today do many things that seem “good” to them, but they are absolutely without any authority from God. When we go to the Word of God, where do we find authority for churches sponsoring ball teams, having raffles, having women preachers, using instrumental music in worship, giving honored titles to heir ministers (“Reverend,” “Father,” etc.), wearing special robes to set them apart, having car washes to raise money, building gymnasiums, etc., and the list could go on.

The point is, these things are “without authority,” and therefore Christ calls them “lawless,” as they are not

in “the will of my Father.” If they were in the Father’s will (the New Testament), then surely we could point to the passage that mentions them.

The church which was established by Christ 2,000 years ago was given instructions as to its doctrine and practice. Note Paul’s words to Timothy, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Holy Spirit said he gave us all that we needed, all that was authorized. We cannot add to or detract from else we practice “lawlessness.”

Is Islam Compatible With Christianity? No. 3

Tommy G. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

Some view Islam as just a religious movement and have been led to believe that we worship the same God as the Muslims, only under a different name. Muslims call their god, “Allah.” In the Koran (Qur’an) he is the same God who made Adam, spared Noah in the flood, was worshiped by Abraham, gave the Law through Moses, and sent Jesus as the Messiah to the Jews. Because there seems to be some parallels between some of the characters in the Bible and the Muslim Koran (Arabic-Qur’an) people assume there is a parallel in theology. This is blatantly false, and this can be seen when examined with the light of divine truth, the Bible. The Allah of Islam is not the same as Jehovah God of the Old Testament Jews or the New Testament Christians.

Allah of the Koran is not Jehovah of the Bible. Some say Islam is a religion of peace, but this is not so. Islam means “submit,” not “peace.” Islam brings peace only to those who blindly submit to their system (religiously, economically, politically, socially, legally, militarily). To Christians, Islam means persecution, war, and death. Muslims act the way they do because of the type god they are taught to follow. He is not the God we know.

Who is this Allah? From ca. 2000 BC the people of Arabia were polytheistic (many gods) and practiced moon worship. At least 400 years before Muhammad, Mecca in Arabia referred to their main deity as “Hubal” (a moon god). The crescent moon symbol appeared on every minaret. At least 400 years before Muhammad, the Arabs worshiped a variety of deities, but the one named “Hubal” (moon god) was considered the greatest of their gods. He was also referred by the generic name “al-ihah” (the god) later shortened to “Allah” before the time of Muhammad. When Muhammad began his work in 610 AD he dropped the name Hubal but retained the generic term “Allah.” He also retained all the pagan rituals of the Arabs, but redefined them in monotheistic (one god) terms. So, even though Islam claims their worship is monotheistic, their roots are from paganism and moon worship. Today on every mosque and flag in the Islam world the crescent moon is the central figure.

Allah is not Jehovah God revealed in the Bible. Regardless of what Muslims might say, Allah, the god of Islam is in no way comparable to the one true God that we worship as Christians. The Muslim concept of God is based on a misunderstanding of the Old Testament instead of the truth of the New Testament, which more fully explains God. Allah of Islam has a very different personality than Jehovah God revealed in the Bible.

Let’s note some differences. The Allah of Islam is an unknowable and impersonal being that does not relate to or interact with his creation in even a remotely personal way. In Islam, it is blasphemy to refer to Allah as father. To the Muslims calling God your father, is like saying Allah had sex with your mother. Yet, the Christian is taught to call Jehovah God “our Father” (Matthew 6:9). Calling God our Father denotes the intimate relationship we maintain with God, as His children (1 John 3:1-2, 10; 5:2. Recognizing the Fatherhood of God demands filial or reciprocal love as commanded of his followers (Matthew 22:36-37). But to the Muslims Allah is an arbitrary, capricious god who acts without rhyme or reason. He is whimsical,

unpredictable, governed by irrational impulses. He forgives and punishes as he chooses. There is no assurance that being a good Muslim will save them. Islam's founder, Muhammad declares, "By Allah, though I am the apostle of Allah, yet I do not know what Allah will do to me." (Hadith - a book of commentary on the Koran, considered by Muslims a sacred book just below the Koran in terms of holiness). From the Koran *"To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it. **Then he will forgive whom he wills and punish whom he wills,** (my emphasis, t.t.) and Allah is over all things competent"* (Sura 2:284). *"Do you not know that Allah possesses the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth? **He punishes whomever he wills, and is all powerful, how can any Muslim be sure of his fate before Allah?"** (Sura 5:40). (my emphasis t.t.). If the founder can't be sure of his fate before Allah, who forgives whom he wills and punishes whom he wills, and yet is all powerful, how can any Muslim be sure of his fate before Allah?*

Allah is certainly not the compassionate loving God we know. Jehovah does not act arbitrarily or capriciously. He is the God of love (1 John 4:8, 16; John 3:16). This is His nature. It is more than a statement, it is His essence. Think of the song we often sing, "The Love of God." Our God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:4-11) and does not choose indiscriminately who will be saved or punished. He does not want anyone to be lost. He wants all to be saved, so He is longsuffering, giving us opportunity after opportunity for sinners to get right with Him (1 Timothy 2:3-6; 2 Peter 3:9). His grace and mercy have been plainly revealed (Titus 2:11), so He is not hard to find (Acts 17:24-31). He sent His Son to die for us when we didn't deserve it (Romans 5:8). His love is universal, unlimited, and boundless. Based on our obedience He has promised to save anyone who will obey His Son, so they may avoid eternal punishment (Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Even though He does not will that anyone be lost and wants all to be saved, it is our decision whether we choose to take advantage of His mercy and grace offered through His Son Jesus Christ.

Do not believe the hype of the world that tells you otherwise. There is only one true Jehovah God and you can learn about Him in the Bible. He is **NOT** the Allah of the Koran. (This series to be continued).

From "Far Off" In Flesh To "Near" In Christ Jesus

Pat Farish | Lancaster, Texas, USA

When Paul wrote Ephesians, Gentiles rode in the back of the bus, had to use their own water fountain, were segregated in the school system, and held in contempt by Jews. Such could not but incur resentment among them toward those using the "U" word toward them. In this condition they had no hope.

Paul wrote to remind them of their former helplessness and hopelessness.

He first described them as separated from Christ. As we have seen, in Christ are "every spiritual blessing" – none elsewhere. One who is separated from Christ is without hope, for he can have no spiritual blessings.

Then he said they were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel." As aliens they were isolated; hostile. They had no recourse to the benefits of citizenship in Israel.

Gentiles were "strangers to the covenants of promise." It was Paul's "kinsmen according to the flesh," the Israelites, to whom "belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises" (Romans 9:4). Gentiles, when they were "far off," were strangers to these things.

As such, they were without hope and without God in the world.

Pause here, a moment, and consider the words, "no hope." From time to time we are called upon to preach funerals. These are never happy events; even though by the godly life of the departed one the survivors

“may not grieve as others do who have no hope,” the pain of separation still stings. Consider, though, the grief of the hopeless, whose loved one has been indifferent to Christ – no basis for comfort. In such circumstances grief, unrelieved by any vestige of hope, must be unbearable. We observe the anguish of those with no hope, with no words available to give genuine comfort.

The bright side of the picture, though, is provided by the “blood of Christ”; for He has broken down “the dividing wall of hostility” and preached “peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near” (2:17).

We are reminded of the blood of Christ each Lord’s Day, as we drink the cup of His supper.

We should be reminded of the blood of Christ each time we contemplate His church, which Paul told the Ephesian elders was “obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

It is the blood of Christ by which we have redemption (Ephesians 1:7); propitiation (Romans 3:24, 25); justification (Romans 5:9); a purified conscience (Hebrews 9:15); by which we were “cleansed from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Every spiritual blessing is in Christ.

Hopeless death: horror of all horrors.

Walking - The Need To Persevere

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

Over the last several years I have been walking on a fairly regular basis. I started just to get in a little better physical condition when traveling overseas in evangelistic efforts. About five years ago, a visit to my doctor revealed I needed to increase my efforts to walk for health reasons. I usually try to walk five days a week. My problem, is being persistent. It is so easy to skip a day, a week or even to stop altogether. There are a number of obstacles to overcome, for me at least, which I face either real or perceived. It is a lot easier to not walk, yet I really need the exercise.

The Bible describes the Christian’s life as a walk. Seven times, in Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus, he instructs them both from a positive and negative standpoint about their walk. The Greek word used in these verses is “peripateô” and is defined as “Hebraistically, to live; i.e. to regulate one’s life, to conduct oneself” (J.H. Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. 504). This word is found 96 times in the New Testament. Vine, in his word study, gives this definition, “is used (a) physically; (b) figuratively, signifying the whole round of the activities of the individual life, whether of the unregenerate, or of the believer” (1217 & 1218).

Notice what Paul says to the church at Ephesus when he speaks of their walk in those seven verses. They are told to walk in good works (2:10); to walk worthy of their calling (4:1); to walk in love (5:2); to walk as children of light (5:8); and to walk circumspectly – which would be carefully, exactly, accurately, and diligently (5:15). Yet there were steps they were to avoid as well. They were not to walk in the lust of their flesh fulfilling its desires, etc. (2:1-3); neither were they to walk as the rest of Gentiles in lewdness, etc. (4:17-19); and not as fools, making sure they redeemed the time (5:15-16).

Walking with the Lord is somewhat like walking physically. I must persevere. There are obstacles to overcome, some real and some perceived. It is easier to stay home from church services on Sunday night or Wednesday night. If I miss one service, is it easy to miss another, then another, etc.? There are members of the Lord’s church who are sick physically and spiritually. They need encouragement and help. Are we willing to continually teach, encourage and care for those who have such needs? The world tries to influence our thinking, which will have its effect on the way we live. Are we going to resist the evil around us and stand for the ways of righteousness? It is easier to blend in with the world. The study of the word of God is vital for our spiritual life. It takes no effort to go days at a time, never open our Bibles, and

spend countless hours watching TV, searching the web, or playing games on an iPhone. There are a great number of ways to illustrate this principle but these will suffice. I must persevere!

Listen to the admonition given to the brethren at Corinth, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). It is for sure, they had been anything but steadfast, when you read the previous chapters of all the problems that existed among them. Yet it seems to me the apostle was telling them to get back to serving God, stop all bickering among yourselves, follow the word which had been preached to you, and be steadfast in this effort. It was said of Enoch, “After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (Gen. 5:22-24). That is perseverance – three hundred years!

If I stop physically walking, my health may not be quite as good as it could be, yet the consequences will not be devastating. I may not live quite as long, the quality of my life may not be as good, yet such is not going to change my eternal existence. But if I do not persevere in my walk with God the end results will be catastrophic. It is he who endures to the end that will be saved (Matthew 10:22). The most valuable thing I have in my possession is my soul. I cannot afford to lose it. Remember also, the choice I make in whether to walk with Jehovah or not, may also have a destructive effect on those I love: spouse, children, grandchildren, etc. Do not lose heart, continue steadfastly, and give yourself to prayer (Luke 18:1).

Benefit of Knowing You

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

What benefit is there in people knowing you? It is a question I often ask myself as a Christian. Of what benefit is there in people knowing me and in being my friend? Hopefully, I will help them as much as others have helped me, in becoming a better person. The good Book says, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17). This proves there is potential value in befriending certain people, so of what benefit are you and I to those who know us?

Of all the ways we should bless those who know us, the greatest contribution we can make to society is in preparing others for the judgment. There is no greater act of love or blessing we can give our family and friends! Paul wrote, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. **Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...**” (2 Corinthians 5:10-11).

Paul shared the gospel of Christ with sinners because he believed in the eternal judgment awaiting everyone he knew. He had “great sorrow and continual grief” in his heart when thinking of how most were unprepared for that Day (Romans 9:2). But his concern did not remain a feeling or concern. He actually cared enough to reason with men “about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come,” even when it caused some to be afraid and avoid him (Acts 24:25). This proves that love requires humility, courage, and persistence to continue reaching out to people. Most will reject such kindness and affection, and sometimes avoid us, but our love for the lost should prompt us to keep reaching out anyway (Acts 13:50-51). Eternity is too long to keep the gospel a secret.

Let our friends be made better for having known us. Let them find in us a genuine example of godliness “in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). Then, let them be made more aware of the mercy of God and the power of the gospel to save sinners, from having crossed paths with us in life. It could be the very reason He allowed them to know us (Acts 16:25-34).

Early Christians And Abortion

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Several years ago, with an election approaching, a candidate canvassing in our area stopped by my home seeking my support in his pursuit of public office. I politely, but firmly informed him that he would not receive my vote, as we had fundamental disagreements on important moral issues.

We briefly discussed same-sex marriages and capital punishment, but the majority of our conversation focused on abortion. The politician had trouble reconciling my support of capital punishment with my utter detest of abortion. Sadly, he fails to acknowledge two things:

- when a criminal is put to death, it is not an act of murder, but an exercise of justice afforded to governing authorities (Romans 13:1-7).
- when an unborn child is put to death, it is not merely a collection of tissue called a "fetus," but an innocent human being (Jeremiah 1:5).

To strengthen his position, the candidate informed me that the early church supported abortion. He stated that ample evidence could be found in quotes from antiquity to demonstrate that the early Christians were not opposed to the act of aborting a pregnancy. When asked for the evidence, he informed me that he was too busy to supply me with any specifics, but that the testimony of the early Christians should be easy enough to find.

He was right. Evidence of what the early church believed on abortion was not difficult to find. However, it was not what he said, and when I sought to share it with him, he refused to see me. Notice some quotes from the early Christians:

- Thou shalt not slay the child by procuring abortion; nor, again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born. (**Letter of Barnabas 19 - 74 AD**)
- There are some women among you who by drinking special potions extinguish the life of the future human in their very bowels, thus committing murder before they even give birth. (**Octavius 30, Minucius Felix - 170 AD**)
- Among surgeons' tools there is a certain instrument, which is formed with a nicely-adjusted flexible frame for opening the uterus first of all and keeping it open; it is further furnished with an annular blade, by means of which the limbs within the womb are dissected with anxious but unflinching care; its last appendage being a blunt or covered hook, wherewith the entire fetus is extracted by a violent delivery. There is also a copper needle or spike, by which the actual death is managed in this furtive robber of life: they give it, from its infanticide function, the name of embrosphaktes, 'the slayer of the infant,' which of course was alive. (**The Soul 25, Tertullian - 210 AD**)
- To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing, nor does it matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to birth. That is a man which is going to be one; you have the fruit already in its seed. (**Apology 9, Tertullian - 210 AD**)
- (Christians) marry, like everyone else, and they beget children, but they do not cast out their offspring. (**Letter of Diognetus - 250 AD**)
- The man, or woman, is a murderer that gives a philtre, if the man that takes it die upon it; so are they who take medicines to procure abortion; and so are they who kill on the highway, and rapparees. (**First Canonical Letter 8, Basil the Great - 374 AD**)
- Wherefore I beseech you, flee fornication... Why sow where the ground makes it its care to destroy the fruit? - where there are many efforts at abortion? - where there is murder before birth? For even the harlot you do not let continue a mere harlot, but make her a murderess also. You see how drunkenness leads to prostitution, prostitution to adultery, adultery to murder; or rather to something even worse than murder. For I have no names to give it, since it does not take off the thing born, but prevents its being born. Why then do thou abuse the gift of God, and fight with His laws, and follow after what is a curse as if a blessing, and make the chamber of procreation a chamber of murder, and arm the woman that was given for childbearing unto slaughter? (**Homilies on Romans, John Chrysostom - 391 AD**)
- Some go so far as to take potions, that they may insure barrenness, and thus murder human beings

almost before their conception. Some, when they find themselves with child through their sin, use drugs to procure abortion, and when, as often happens, they die with their offspring, they enter the lower world laden with the guilt not only of adultery against Christ but also of suicide and child murder. (**Letters 22, Jerome - 396 AD**)

Was the political hopeful who came to my door misinformed or lying? I don't know. What I do know is that the evidence clearly shows that the church in the first, second, third and fourth centuries were opposed to abortion. More importantly, the Bible plainly establishes that God considers the aborting of a pregnancy to be an act of murder, and under the law of Moses, it was punishable by death (see Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5; Exodus 21:22-25).

What a calamity that our nation is willing to put to death over 100,000 unborn children each year, calling it a woman's "right to choose", while criminals, deserving of death enjoy benefits unbecoming their sorry state! What twisted madness has caused our nation to act so corruptly?

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." (Isaiah 5:20)

Thanks to Steve Rudd for his work in compiling quotes from antiquity on the topic of abortion.

More quotes may be found at: www.bible.ca/H-Abortion.htm

Walk in the Light

Sean P. Cavender | Raymore, Missouri, USA

One of the most used metaphors of sin and righteousness is by showing the contrast between darkness (sin) and light (righteousness). The Lord taught through the powerful use of this metaphor. The apostle Paul used this metaphor in his epistles (Ephesians 5:8, 9). However, it is the apostle John that seems to repeatedly use the metaphor throughout all of his writings.

"Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, 'I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life'" (John 8:12).

"This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:5-7).

We quickly learn several things in these two passages:

- Jesus is the Light of the world
- God is Light, no darkness exists in Him at all
- we must have fellowship with the Light
- fellowship with the Light is maintained through walking in the Light
- we must avoid walking in darkness
- life everlasting is promised for those who walk in the Light

If you turn on a light in a dark room, the light brightens the room and allows you to see things that you once were unable to see. A small amount of light can transform a dark room. Applying that logic to the spiritual realm is necessary. The light is different than the darkness; righteousness is different than evil. Jesus stated that He is the Light of the world (John 8:12); John tells us there is no darkness in God at all since God is Light (1 John 1:5). It becomes evident there is no sin, unrighteousness, nor evil in God. God is completely and totally good.

John then introduces the important subject of fellowship with God. How does a person have fellowship with God? Well, fellowship with God cannot be obtained or maintained through a life of darkness. If we walk in

darkness then we lie and do not practice the truth, and we have deceived ourselves (1 John 1:6, 8).

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us," (1 John 1:8).

How do we walk in the Light and have fellowship with God?

1. **We must confess our sins (1 John 1:9).** Part of living the righteous life is recognizing our faults and our sins. Our sins separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2), therefore fellowship is severed by sin, no matter how few of sins it might be. However, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins when we confess our unrighteous deeds.
2. **We must keep his commandments (1 John 2:3-5).** Walking in the Light would be a miserable stroll if we constantly sinned and were only confessing our faults. If nothing good is ever done and no obedience ever shown, then what would the purpose be in trying to walk in the Light? There is much more to being a Christian. We are to keep God's commandments! We prove our love for God by obeying Him. This is one way that "our joy may be made complete" (1 John 1:4).
3. **We must love our brethren.** *"The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him,"* (1 John 2:10). Just as our love for God is proven through obedience, our love for our brethren is not through word only, but by action (1 John 3:18).

The Light of the world came to a world full of darkness and sin (John 1:5). So how do we gain victory from the world? John tells us we have victory over the world through faith. *"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith,"* (1 John 5:4). We must place our faith in Jesus, the Son of God (1 John 5:5) and we can have the assurance of having overcome sin and darkness. We are blessed with confidence that eternal life is ours!

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us... (1 John 5:13-14).

Do Not Resist an Evil Person

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

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 your 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 two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away (Matthew 5:38-42).

Perhaps no teaching of the Master has resulted in greater consternation and misunderstanding than this passage. A misapplication of this precept has resulted in fanaticism on the one hand and skepticism on the other. What is the meaning and application of this great moral commandment?

Though Jesus was indeed contrasting what their Jewish teachers taught the people (verses 20-21, 27, 33, 38, 43), the Master was also pointing to the fulfillment and cessation of the Old Covenant in the law of the kingdom (verses 17-19). The Lord quoted the law of Moses directly to identify the rule He was replacing (cf. Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:19-20; Deuteronomy 19:21). This is the oldest principle of simple justice known to man. It is known as the Lex Talionis, or the principle of "like for like." It is part of the earliest surviving code of laws, the Code of Hammurabi, ruler of Babylon from 2285 to 2242 B.C. (Barclay. 1:160)

Enemies of the Bible assail this law as brutal. Actually, far from being so, the purpose of this commandment was to prevent brutality. Human nature demands revenge for wrong suffered, for this is justice, but hatred and anger produce excessive revenge. One man knocks out another's tooth, so the other man kills the aggressor. This is what is happening in the Middle East at the instigation of Muslim

teachers. The law of "like for like" limits this revenge. The punishment must be equivalent to the injury received. Furthermore, this law acts as a safeguard against personal injury. If an assailant knew he would suffer in return the equivalent of the pain, injury, or suffering he inflicted, he would not, in most cases, inflict the injury.

It is both the right and responsibility of civil government to administer this justice (Romans 13:3-4). When rulers fail to do so, crime is rampant (Ecclesiastes 8:11). The judge who fails to administer such justice neither fears God nor regards man (Luke 18:2-5).

Furthermore, Moses never intended this principle as a license for unlimited personal revenge, but as a guide to judicial equity. The apostle Paul, in his inspired interpretation of the Master's teaching on vengeance, virtually repeated Old Testament guidelines (Leviticus 19:18; Proverbs 20:22; 24:29 25:21; Romans 12:17-21).

However, the Mosaic legislation did command that the "avenger of blood" put to death the murderer (Numbers 35; Deuteronomy 19). The term "avenger" referred to that particular relative whose special duty it was to restore the violated family integrity, who had to redeem not only landed property that had been alienated from the family (Leviticus 25:25), or a member of the family that had fallen into slavery (Leviticus 25:47), but also the blood that had been taken away from the family by murder (Keil & Delitzsch, quoting Oehler. 1:262).

The law even presumed the avenger would act "while his anger is hot" (Deuteronomy 19:6). This is the very vengeance splashed in blood red on TV news scenes of the Middle East carried out by Muslims in the name of Allah but devoid of the Mosaic safeguards against wanton savagery.

A final consideration which demonstrates the lack of brutality of the Old Testament command was the fact that, in practice, except where murder was involved (Numbers 35:29-34); a money payment was accepted in place of actual maiming of the criminal.

Since the law of Christ clearly approves the essential and righteous role of civil government as an avenger (Romans 13:3-4), and since the Lord's precepts set against this statement of verse 38 pertain to personal vengeance, Christ must have directed His prohibitions against personal revenge, including the Mosaic "avenger of blood," not against civil officers in upholding the laws of the state.

It being necessarily true that the Master's doctrine deals with personal vengeance, what does he teach about the subject? The principle Christ enunciates is "resist not evil." Is this a demand that Christians must passively submit to any and all sorts of physical violence? Must one watch a maniac kill his family and destroy his property, without lifting a finger to resist? Is this an injunction against Christians serving in the armed forces or on a police force?

About fifty years ago I heard Bryan Vinson, Sr. preach an outstanding lesson on the Christian and civil government ("Dual Citizenship" was the title of his classic sermon), defending the right of a Christian to bear arms for his government. A young preacher foolishly jumped brother Vinson in the aisle before other members after services, contending the Lord demands total non-resistance on the part of Christians. Brother Vinson simply inquired of him, "If a vicious criminal broke into your house and attacked your wife, would you come to her help?" The young preacher's retort was, "Why, that's totally irrelevant!" His flabbergasted wife standing beside him quickly replied, "I don't think so!" Nor do I. If the passage demands complete passivity, thus eliminating service in the armed forces and police forces, it also eliminates any defense of one's own family and property. If not, why not?

Since the Scriptures are truth (John 17:17), and truth is always consistent with itself, it follows that the Scriptures are always harmonious one with another. The Master commanded, "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him" (Luke 17:3). Verbal resistance is resistance. The Lord Jesus Himself rebuked a Jewish

officer for unlawfully striking Him (John 18:22-23). When the Romans in Jerusalem threatened to beat Paul without a trial, the great apostle insisted on his rights as a Roman citizen (Acts 22:22-29). When the radical Jews of that same city bound themselves under a curse to kill Paul, the beloved apostle made use of the armed power of the state, two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spear men, to thwart their wicked scheme (Acts 23:12-24). When Festus would have sent Paul back to Jerusalem, where the Jews still waited to kill him, again the man of God demanded his citizenship rights and appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:9-12). In all of these instances, the apostle Paul in all innocence appealed to the armed power of civil government. If such use of armed might is evil, so is our calling on armed men for protection, for we must “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (Ephesians 5:11).

Another basic rule of Bible study draws us to the same conclusion. Every statement must be taken in context. The Master contrasted both the Law (verses 17-19) and that which the scribes and Pharisees imagined the law of Moses allowed (verse 20) to that which the law of Christ demands (verses 39-42). The Master is discussing vengeance (verse 38). “Resist not evil” is an absolute prohibition against personal vengeance or even an attitude of resentment as the result of wrong suffered.

When a Christian suffers wrong, he should not “vow to get even” or seethe in resentment. He should do good to the evil-doer and leave vengeance to the Lord (Romans 12:17-21). God has at least three means of accomplishing this vengeance. He has authorized the punitive power of civil government, which involves the police officer (Romans 13:3-4). Christ Himself, as did God in ancient days, still “rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever he will” (Daniel 4:17; Revelation 19:15), and this involves the use of armed forces. God will reap final and complete vengeance in the last judgement of all men (Revelation 20:11-15).

The Master used four examples to illustrate this principle. Each teaches that we should not seek personal vengeance.

The Lord commanded, “But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” (Matthew 5:39). The term translated “slaps” means “strike with the open hand, esp. in the face, slap” (Arndt & Gingrich. 741). This harmonizes with the fact that a right handed person would hit another person on the right cheek by slapping him with the back of the hand.

In all ages, a “slap on the face” has been regarded as the grossest of insults, but it does not imperil one’s life (cf. 1 Kings 22:24; Lamentations 3:30; John 19:3; 2 Corinthians 11:20). The illustration is simple and demanding. When wicked people heap upon us the lowest and meanest insults, we must not retaliate in kind. Any loyal Christian has been called all sorts of demeaning names, has endured ostracism, and has been the object of vicious lies. One must never angrily turn on such an attacker as a dog on its tormentor. When Jesus was so stricken, he rebuked the offender, but refused to retaliate, although all the forces of heaven were available to Him by prayer (John 18:22- 23). He is our perfect example of enduring suffering without retaliation (1 Peter 2:18-24).

The Lord demanded, “If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also” (verse 40). The “tunic” denoted “the inner vest or under garment” (Vine. 1:198). Even the poorest of Jews would usually have a change of tunics (Barclay, *Ibid*). But the “cloak” was “an outer garment, a mantle” (Vine, *Ibid*) and consisted of “a large square piece of cloth, provided with tassels” which “was thrown over the left shoulder and brought over under the right arm” (Davis. 148). The Jew would usually possess only one such garment and used it both as a robe by day and a blanket by night (Barclay, *Ibid*). The law forbade keeping this cloak overnight as a pledge for debt (Exodus 22:26-27; Deuteronomy 24:12-13).

This is a case of judicial injustice. It does not forbid the Christian’s use of the court in self defense, as the apostle Paul so employed it. It does teach that, even should one use the courts to persecute us, we should not seek vengeance. Be rather willing to lose that which by right cannot be taken from you than to seek personal vengeance (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:7).

The Master enjoined, "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two"(verse 41). "Compel" means "to impress into service" (Vine 1:219) and was applied to the forced transport of military baggage by the inhabitants of a country through which troops were passing The sense of oppression is involved, subjection to arbitrary military power (EGT).

Palestine was an occupied country. At any moment a Jew might feel the touch of the flat of a Roman spear on his shoulder, and know that he was compelled to serve the Romans, it might be in the most menial way (Barclay, *Ibid*). The Romans had erected "mile posts," markers at intervals of one mile, and a Jew could be compelled to carry a load for a hated soldier in this occupying army for one mile, but no more. Jesus taught Jews seething in anger under this hated, foreign power to do more than they require; carry their burden two miles.

This is a case of government oppression, subjection to arbitrary military power. The Roman yoke, starkly obvious when one was compelled to carry out belittling tasks, was especially galling to the proud Jews, who hated their masters and yearned for freedom. How exceedingly unsavory must Simon of Cyrene's work have seemed, when he was "compelled to bear" the cross of Jesus (Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). How easy it would be to allow an attitude of bitter resentment to spring up and to seek revenge, as the Zealots did. How tempting it would be to see just how little one could get by with in serving such a master. But the Christian is to submit to arbitrary, even tyrannical power, with cheerfulness. Rather than seeing how little we can cooperate and still get by, we should exceed the demands (1 Peter 2:18-20).

Jesus commanded, "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away" (verse 42). Did the Master teach an unlimited benevolence with our material goods? If so, we would soon be impoverished, and our families would be begging. People who insist that the Lord's demand "not to resist an evil person" is completely unqualified quickly point out that the context qualifies the statement we are now noticing and that other passages limit it. If this be so for one, why not for the other?

The Lord himself promised, "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:14). Yet, he refused to grant Paul's request (2 Corinthians 11:8- 9) and informed others their prayers were not heard because they asked through improper motives (James 4:3). Even so here, Jesus teaches an attitude toward giving which is limited and qualified by the context and by other passages.

The Old Covenant taught Jews to lend generously to their poor brethren even if they might not be fully repaid and not to charge them interest (Exodus 22:25; Deuteronomy 15:7-11). The Master teaches us to give without seeking anything in return (Luke 6:30; Acts 20:35) and to give to our enemies as well as our brethren (Matthew 5:43-44; Romans 12:20-21). We must give to the needy cheerfully, not resentfully.

Other passages do qualify the command. In our giving, we must not neglect the needs of our own family (1 Timothy 5:8), we must put spiritual matters first (Acts 6:1-4), we are not to encourage the indolent (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12), we should not use material assistance as an attraction to unbelievers (John 6:26-27), and we must not give beyond our ability to do so honestly (Acts 5:1-11). But these limitations do not negate the fact that, as disciples of Christ, we must give willingly and without resentment to those in need.

Our Lord does not demand that we be passive in the face of onslaught and danger. He does allow us to protect our lives, our family, and our property. He does not forbid us to serve in the military or police forces. But Christ does command us not to seek personal vengeance for wrongs suffered. We must be willing to bear the grossest insults, the greatest legal injustice, the most arbitrary power, and the needs of the poor with neither resentment nor personal vengeance. The standard is high and difficult, but if we would be partakers of the righteousness of His kingdom, we must obey.

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