

Matthew 5:38-42

Cheek-Turning & Self Defense

KSN [cheek, sword / insult, law, evil]

1) Sermon on the Mount

- a) The Purpose – Expound Ethics, Expose Inability
- b) The Contrast – Jewish vs. Jesus – 5:21-48
- c) The Correction – Civil vs. Personal – 5:38-48

2) Jesus' Teaching – “Do not Resist”

- a) Its Personal
- b) “Evil”
- c) “Resist”
- d) Examples
 1. v. 39 – slap on the cheek
 2. v. 40 – legal suit against you
 3. v. 41 – oppressive use of authority
 4. v. 42 – beggars & borrowers

3) Is Self-Defense Permissible?

- a) Three Master Principles regarding Violent Assaults
 1. Must Do no Evil (Ex 20:13, 21:12-27)
 2. Must Return no Evil (Rom 12:17)
 3. May Restrain the Evil
 - Sanctity of Life – (Gen 9:6, James 3:9-10)
 - Love for Neighbor / Golden Rule (Matt 22:39, 7:12)
- b) Reasonable Means of Restraining Evil Assaults
 1. Escape – Luke 4:29-30, John 8:59,10:39; Acts 9:25, 14:5-6, 14:19-20 [yet v. 21!]
 2. Warn – Acts 22:25, Acts 23:3
 3. Distract – Acts 23:6-10
 4. Dial 911 – Acts 23:16-17
 5. Defend in Court – Acts 22,23,24,26
 6. Pray – 2 Thess 3:2

7. Sword (Physical Force)???

a. General Theology

- Sword to restrain evil is given to the State (Gen 9:6, Rom 13:1-6)
- Rights vs. Love
 - 1 Cor 6:7, 8:9 – we prefer Love over Rights toward fellow believers
 - 1 Cor 9:12, 10:23-24 – we prefer Gospel over Rights toward unbelievers

b. Applied Theology (3 episodes in Jesus' life)

- Luke 22:35-38 – Take along a Sword
- Luke 22:49-51 – But not Peter's Sword
 - A "legal" assault
 - Jesus words to Peter (Matt 26:51-54)
 - i. Live by sword, Die by sword – v. 52
 - ii. God will Protect me – v. 53
 - iii. This Must be So – v. 54
- John 18:19-24 – when Jesus did not 'turn the other cheek'

Summary Points

1. When a Christian is legally, but immorally insulted (Matt 5:38-41) by another (whether for religious, racial, financial, or personal reasons), a Christian may not return evil or personally avenge. Instead the Christian must always "turn the other cheek" by seeking to serve our "enemy" in love, pity, and kindness, following the example of Jesus and the Apostles to bless and do good in return (Rom 12:14,17-21) while we leave room for the wrath of God.
2. When an illegal assault is being perpetrated by one against another, a Christian may defend self or others by appropriate legal means. Such means include use of defensive force deemed necessary to escape or restrain the evil, out of a heart of love for neighbor (even enemy).
3. The sword (physical force) is never needful nor permissible for the Christian to advance or protect spiritual ends (conversion, fellowship, worship, discipleship, prayer, preaching, etc.), including when the Christian is under religious persecution by the State. Yet the Christian may use any and every non-violent, legal means available to restrain or escape such persecution, even while remembering the eternal value of remaining faithful in it (Matt 5:10-12).

Praxis

1. How is it possible to turn the other cheek and defend yourself at the same time?
2. How is seeking to restrain someone's evil toward you an act of love for them?
3. Are there any heart and practical outworkings in our day of Jesus' instructions in Luke 22:35-38 to bring along \$, bag, sword?
4. Thought Question: If Jesus (& Apostles) had supernatural power and didactic influence to restrain the systemic and personal injustices being perpetrated on many around them, why do we not read of them doing so? How does this inform our view of "mission" in this evil world?