

Sermon on the Mount Part XVII - The Law of Non-Retaliation

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- [0 : 00] Sermon on the Mount, and we're dealing with the law of non-retaliation slash love.
- Please turn at this time to Romans chapter 12. And in Romans chapter 12, we'll be looking at verses 14 through 21.
- Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
- Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.
- Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
- [1 : 13] Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.
- But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. And if he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.
- Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Well, we certainly don't have any difficulty at all.
- If our friend is hungry, feed him. And if our friend is thirsty, give him the drink. But we do have a real problem doing that for those we would consider to be our enemies, don't we?
- And yet, that is the thrust of what the passage is talking about. And I want you to turn to the passage we've been discussing for the past several months.
- [2 : 24] In Matthew chapter 5, and we will see the counterpart of that. It is just that the Apostle Paul is reinforcing what is written here in the Sermon on the Mount, given by our Lord, prior to Paul ever thinking about writing texts of the New Testament.
- But he is reinforcing that. And we are arriving at the 6th. And this will be the last of those special areas in the Sermon on the Mount.
- They are all here in chapter 5. I'm not going to reiterate them again, except to say that they are the laws of murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, non-resistance, and then the last is love.
- And that's the one that we are going to consider for this morning. So, if you will, if you haven't found it already, turn to Matthew chapter 5. And let us begin reading.
- With verse 43, and you will see how this dovetails with what Gary just read from Romans chapter 12. I'm looking at verse 43 now, Matthew chapter 5.
- [3 : 44] Christ says, You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
- In order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he causes his Son to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

I want to stop there for just a moment and offer a word of explanation about verse 45. Because the way it reads here in the text, it kind of gives you the impression that if you love your enemies, and if you pray for those who persecute you, that is a ticket into God's approval and God's acceptance.

So that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven. That's not really the meaning that is being conveyed at all. But I am confident that the way it ought to be rendered and the expression as to what it means goes something like this.

I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may reveal yourselves to be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

[5 : 05] It isn't in order to become, but in order to show forth who and what you really are. Because if there is anything that is to characterize a child of God from an unbeliever, it is that they are to be different.

And in many respects, radically different. Even though we are in the world, we are not to be of the world. And we are not to operate as the world operates.

We have a different motif. We have a different motive. We have a different empowerment. We have different goals and objectives. We have different viewpoints. All of these things separate the believer from the unbeliever.

As Paul stated it, If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things are become new.

This means we have a new mindset and a new way of looking at things. So this passage, as well as the one just read, in Romans chapter 12, is very confusing and enigmatic.

[6 : 12] I would dare say that out of all of the scriptures in the New Testament, this is one of the most puzzling. And it's tied in with the law of non-retaliation and the law of love.

As I said, they are actually inseparable. And I think I made a note of that in the bulletin. If you will look at that. The law of non-retaliation is to be motivated by the law of love.

Men were to do the one because of the other. It was fulfilling the law of love that prompted the law of non-retaliation. Why is it that we are not to return evil for evil?

Why is it that we are to defer from a get-even attitude and allow God to take whatever vengeance needs to be taken?

The text says, in Romans it says, leave room for the wrath of God. If you retaliate against someone who has wronged you by doing a wrong in return to them, you take up the room.

[7 : 27] You are not leaving room for the wrath of God. You and I cannot be trusted to reciprocate in a fair and just way.

Because we are reeling from the wrong that was done to us, whatever it might have been, in word or deed. And the natural born tendency is to get even.

Get back at them. Hurt them like they hurt you. That's the way you play the game. No, it isn't. That's the way the world plays the game.

Tit for tat. Eye for eye. Tooth for tooth. That is not to be the way we are to operate. We are to operate from a supernatural mood.

And that means we do not curse. We bless those who curse us. We honor those who dishonor us.

[8 : 32] What? Are you crazy? Who wants to do that? Boy, I say, don't get mad, get even. Well, there is a high cost to getting even.

But that's a message for next week. So, I want you to consider this. And I especially want to draw your attention to two authorities whom I have mentioned in the past.

And I am confident that they have a lot of light to shed upon this passage because of the uniqueness of their position and their background. And I have referred to them before and we've already drawn upon some of their wisdom.

And I'm talking about two men who are believers. One is I'm sure with the Lord now because if he isn't he's probably 115 or 120 years old.

So, it's a pretty good bet that he's in the glory. And his name is Dr. George Lamza. L-A-M-S-A. And he even has a translation of the Bible put out in his name, Lamza's edition several years ago.

[9 : 45] And what makes this man's writings and viewpoints so critical and so important is that he is not only a devoted Christian, a solid believer, but he is or was a resident, a citizen of Syria.

And we're all very well familiar with Syria right now, probably more so than we want to be because it is a real hot spot in the world. This is where Bashar Assad has succeeded his father and he is for all practical purposes he is a dictator there, a big tall guy.

I don't know if you've ever noticed or not, but he's about 6'6 or 6'7 and he dwarfs over all the people that he is with. And by profession, he is an ophthalmologist.

He is an eye specialist. That was his training. But then he replaced his father when he passed off the scene several years ago.

And now, Syria is locked in a brutal civil war. It is the rebels against the establishment of which Assad is the head. And you know, in fact, you cannot escape it in all of the media.

[11 : 00] It is all over as to whether or not the U.S. should strike Syria because of their use of chemical weapons. It's been a very difficult thing to determine exactly who used those chemical weapons because it isn't for sure that it was Assad who used them.

Some are of the opinion that it was the rebel group that used the chemical weapons and they killed their own people with it. And they did so as a tool of manipulation to make the United States so outraged over that that we would come to their rescue and join their side against the establishment.

Now, this, of course, has never been verified. We do not know if it is strictly rumor or if it is what you would call a conspiracy theorist, but I wouldn't put anything past these people because they have a penchant for eliminating their own handily whenever they think it will serve their purpose.

And part of the reason that they do that is it is linked with their theology. They actually believe that if they kill, if they kill their own people, but it furthers the cause of Islam, then those people who were killed become martyrs.

Whether they knew it or not, whether they wanted to be or not, that is their status as martyrs. And as martyrs, they go into the presence in favor of Allah. So, you know, it would be very easy to justify doing away with a few hundred people if you really honestly believe that.

[12 : 39] And that's partly where they are coming from. So, Dr. Lamza is a Syrian or was a Syrian citizen and he writes from a Mideastern perspective when it comes to culture and understanding of what's taking place, etc.

And the other is a current scholar who is, I assume, alive and well on planet Earth. His name is Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum. He spent a year or two at Cedarville University, probably back in the 70s would be my guess.

And he also got a degree from Dallas Theological Seminary and then he went to New York University where he received his PhD.

He is a world-traveled scholar. He speaks about five or six different languages fluently, including Hebrew.

And he came to this country. He was born in Siberia of Jewish parents, came to Poland and then went to Germany.

[13 : 48] And this was his family during World War II when things were very, very difficult for the Jews. And then I think to Great Britain and finally to the United States with his family. And when he was, I believe, 19 years old, he came to faith in Christ as his Messiah.

And he has turned out to be quite a scholar. He would take groups to the Holy Land every two years. He would limit the number who could go to 30.

It was Barbara and my privilege to be two of those 30 in 1990. And we spent six weeks in Israel, a little state that is no bigger than the state of New Jersey.

And we put over 3,000 miles on the van. We went crisscross, up and down, back and forth. Every way you can imagine, we saw places that nobody else, none of the tourists see.

And that's why it was not a tourist thing. It was a historical, geographical tour. And we enjoyed it immensely. And I remember after we came back from the tour, I told Barbara, I said, I am just amazed at this man's grasp and knowledge of Israel.

[14 : 59] You can ask him a question about Israel anywhere from Abraham up to the present. And he's got a good, solid answer that he can easily prove.

And it's just remarkable. And it wasn't long, I was watching a television production and it was featuring Hal Lindsey. And many of you are familiar with Hal Lindsey.

He wrote the all-time bestseller of the 1970s. His book that he wrote, the first book he ever wrote in the 1970s, outsold every other book that was published during that whole decade, whether it was novels or secular or whatever.

And it was a book called The Late Great Planet Earth. And many of you may remember that book. Well, Hal Lindsey wrote the book. And on this television program, they were talking about some of the goings-on in Israel and what prophecy foretold.

And someone was asking him about who was really an authority on the nation of Israel. And Hal Lindsey spoke up and said, well, he said, as far as I'm concerned, there is no man living that knows more about ancient or modern or present-day Israel than Arnold Fruchtenbaum.

[16 : 18] And a lot of the people in the audience had never heard of him, but of course we had. And he is quite a guy. He's quite a guy. He has his ministry. It's called Ariel Ministries.

And it's located in California. And he has taken, I think, probably 10 or 12 groups.

He would go every two years to Israel for these excursions of geography and history. And now he is pretty much homebound.

His wife has come down with a disease. I think it's MS. And she's pretty much confined to a wheelchair. So he pretty much considers his ministry now, ministering to her and writing.

But if you are at all interested and you want some absolutely out-of-sight material from a Christian Hebrew perspective, you could log on to Ariel, A-R-I-E-L.

[17 : 20] Ariel in Hebrew means Lion of God. And ArielMinistries.com, I think it is. And he's got an enormous amount of material that's available there. So he is one of our other authorities.

And I want to begin with quoting some of his material as regards the law of non-resistance. And it has to do with the passage in Matthew 5.

So if you'll be looking at verses 38 through 42, let's read these, if we may. You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But I say unto you, resist not him that is evil, but whosoever smites you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with you and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also.

Now, can you not see in this passage the culture already springing to life and coming to bear here? And we say, go to law and sue you to take your coat.

[18 : 24] What's that all about? Now, we have all kinds of lawsuits going on in this country every day. You can find a bevy of lawyers who will stand in line to represent people for every harebrained offense that you can imagine.

But nobody gets sued for their coat. Do they? Of course not. We go after big dollars. So, he will explain that.

And whosoever shall compel you to go one mile with him, go with him two. Well, what is that about? Anybody ever set upon you to go with him a mile?

What does that mean? You see, here is where the difference in culture really becomes important because that doesn't mean anything to us. So, what would an equivalent be?

Now, we have made some transference because even in our culture, we pick up on things like that. And you've heard and you've probably used the term yourself. I did everything I could for that person.

[19 : 23] I went the extra mile. And everybody knows what you mean. Where did that come from? It came from this. It came from this passage here in Matthew 5. If anyone should compel you to go one mile, go with him two.

Give to him that asks you. And from him that would borrow of you, turn not you away. What does that mean? Are you supposed to be some kind of a wealth dispenser?

If somebody comes up to you that you know is a deadbeat, he owes everybody in town, never pays anybody back what he owes them, and he says, could you lend me \$50 until the weekend and I'll pay you back then?

Are you going to do it? And if you don't do it, are you in violation of something like this? Whoever would ask of you, don't turn him away.

Can you think of a quicker or more sure way to impoverish yourself? I mean, once the word gets out that you are a mark, everybody descends on you because everybody's got needs.

[20 : 36] So, do you set yourself up to be taken advantage of like that? You can start out generous and end up broke. Is that what he's talking about? Part of the commentary that Dr. Fruchtenbaum offers is, this next example Jesus dealt with was the Mosaic commandment that spoke of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Some have misinterpreted his words as a repudiation of the Mosaic law, but he did not come to repudiate the law. He came to fulfill the law. This was part of the law.

Again, in its context, a distinction was made between his interpretation, that is, Jesus, and the Pharisaic interpretation of the righteousness which the law demanded.

The Pharisees interpreted an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, as grounds for personal vengeance and retaliation. As far as the Mosaic law was concerned, this commandment had to do with a judicial aspect, but it doesn't say that in the text.

Our problem is, those to whom Jesus spoke these words, they knew that. It was a given. They knew that's what he was talking about, but we don't. So, in order for us to understand it, we have to confer with someone who was plugged into the culture and knew what the people understood by it, because a lot of times, you make statements and you say things without explaining the whole thing in detail and all of its ramifications, and the other person knows exactly what you're talking about.

[22 : 16] You don't have to go into a lot of detail and explain it. So, what we have here is our Savior giving this discourse in an ordinary, relaxed, customary, informal way.

He is seated here on the Mount of Olives and there is a vast throng of people out there and he is just talking. He's talking their language. He's using terminology and concepts that they fully well understand, but we don't.

That's the problem, to get from there to here and see what the equivalent is today. He says, as far as the Mosaic Law was concerned, this commandment had to do with the judicial aspect.

Punishment had to be by a proper court of law and the punishment had to fit the crime. It was never intended that this commandment be taken as grounds for personal vengeance because as far as personal vengeance is concerned, the commandment was, vengeance is mine, says the Lord, I will repay.

No one had the right to take personal vengeance against someone else. for this would mean taking the law into his own hands. It's a kind of vigilantism.

[23 : 25] The commandment, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, was never intended for the purpose of personal vengeance, but rather for proper punishment to fit the crime as passed by a court of law.

This was the righteousness that this commandment demanded. It demanded that the punishment be carried out in a proper way, not in the sense of personal vengeance or retaliation.

Now he goes into the law of love and I want you to see there is a bridge between the law of love and the law of non-retaliation. They feed each other. It is because we have an attitude of the law of love that causes us to forego the temptation of retaliating.

If we are really motivated by love, rather than getting even or getting back at that person, we will want to turn that person from an enemy into an asset, into a friend.

Someone has said the best way to deal with your enemies is to make them your friends. How do you do that? You do that by not retaliating, but returning good for evil, returning blessing for cursing.

[24 : 45] And I'll be the first to admit, that is not our natural inclination. When someone cuts you off in traffic and makes you swerve to miss them or something like that, I'm sure you yell out, Bless you, my friend.

Well, road rage is a real thing today, isn't it? And usually it happens because some dirty, no good, skunk behind a wheel trying to pass for a driver of an automobile, blah, blah, blah, you know.

Little boy said he wanted to go with his dad to the hardware store and run a couple of errands, so he was about four years old and his dad says, okay, jump in the car and we'll go. And they went to the hardware store and they picked up something from the grocery store and they dropped by the dry cleaners and everything and the traffic was heavy and they got back and mom says to the little man, she says, well, did you enjoy your time out with your daddy?

Was that exciting? He said, it sure was. We saw two idiots, a nincompoop and a couple of other things that he probably shouldn't have pronounced. And you know what?

all that is? That's what comes natural. It's return kind for kind. It's return insult for insult. Only, only, don't we want to make our insult a little bit stronger for good measure.

[26 : 16] and when you do, you do not leave room for the wrath of God. You fill up that room yourself and we almost never do it right.

Well, these two are so tied together, so connected and all of these, all of these, but I say unto you, all of them have to do with how we view life and God and values and everything else.

this is all about day-to-day living in every respect. Now, here is the last example that Jesus gave under the code of true righteousness regarding the law of love.

The Mosaic law stated, now get this, the law said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

does it say that? It most certainly does. It most certainly does. Now, let me inject this. When Jesus gives these things, he is giving them in a contextual environment that involves the nation of Israel in a covenant relationship exclusively with Jehovah, the God of Israel.

[27 : 36] these principles do not apply to Syrians, Egyptians, Babylonians, etc. This stuff is not for them.

It's never given for them. They don't have the capacity, ability, or responsibility to act in this manner, but God's people do. So, first of all, this is a historic thing, and it is a national thing.

It has to do with how the Jews were to treat their fellow man as well as their neighbors who were not Jews. And listen to this. You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

This is Leviticus 19.18. Here, too, he has been misinterpreted as repudiating the Mosaic Law, but he clearly stated that he came for the purpose of fulfilling the law, not to destroy it.

the Pharisees interpreted this commandment in three ways. First, the neighbor was always the Jew. In the Jewish mind, the neighbor was always the Jew, which means a fellow Jew.

[28 : 53] That was the context in which they defined the word neighbor. Now, that's not the definition that Jesus is going to give. remember in Luke 15.

No. Maybe it's Luke 12. We won't go there, but this is the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Remember this man who was on his way to Jerusalem, and he was accosted by bandits, and they took his wealth, and they stripped him of his clothing, and left him for dead.

And a Levite came along. A Levite was a member of the religious establishment. He was a priest, and he didn't have time for this guy.

He considered him riffraff, and he just left and walked on by. And another one came by from the religious establishment, and he didn't want to be contaminated by touching this person, you know, so he went on by.

[29 : 58] And lo and behold, here came a Samaritan. A Samaritan in the mind of a Jew. A Samaritan is the lowest of the low.

You couldn't be any worse off than to be a Samaritan. Because first of all, a Samaritan was a half breed Jew. And they had nothing but utter contempt for the Samaritans.

Yet, it was this supposedly no account, low-life Samaritan. A Samaritan, mind you, who came upon the man and bound up his wounds with oil and wine and bandages and put him on his own donkey and went to the nearest inn and told the innkeeper, this man has been robbed on the road.

He's been mugged on the road. and I want to leave him here in your care and please take good care of this man and when I come back through here again in a few days, whatever it has cost you to take care of him, I will reimburse you and make it good.

And then Jesus turned to his people and said, tell me, which one was a neighbor to the man? And of course, their faces turned red and they were embarrassed because in the parable it was the Jew who was shown up by this renegade Samaritan who's supposed to be worthless.

[31 : 32] So, Jesus is saying, your neighbor in these instances is your fellow human being. Now, you cannot translate this into a national thing.

Israel had national responsibilities and national commands that were given to them regarding some of their neighbors. And all of that has to be taken into consideration.

And neither can you make these things applicable to the United States of America as to how we ought to regard other nations. That's an entirely different ballgame. Entirely different circumstances.

Entirely different everything. So, we cannot nationalize this somehow and say, well, the Bible says thus and so and thus and so. So, that's what the United States of America ought to do. In the first place, the diplomats and the bureaucrats won't be listening, so it won't make any difference anyway.

But that's not a national thing. Let me continue on with what Dr. Fruchtenbaum says. The neighbor, in the mind of the Jews, in the mind of the audience to whom Jesus was speaking, this was the way they were thinking.

[32 : 42] In their eyes, the neighbor was always the Jew, the enemy was always the Gentile, that is, a non-Jew, so one must love the Jews and hate the Gentiles.

A second way they interpreted this commandment was that it was proper to have internal animosity and hatred toward those who were considered enemies, such as the publicans.

that's not republicans, that's just plain publicans, okay? Another word for tax collectors. So, it was permissible to hate the publicans or the tax collectors.

A third way the Pharisees interpreted this commandment was that a neighbor was a fellow Pharisee and an enemy was a non-Pharisee, particularly someone, if he was someone like a Sadducee.

But the Mosaic law never intended this commandment to be interpreted as a blank check for hating all Gentiles, or as a basis for personal animosity, hatred, or enmity toward those one considered one's enemy, such as Sadducees or publicans.

[33 : 52] Rather, the Mosaic law gave this commandment in the sense that one must love those whom God loves, but one must hate those whom God hates.

does God hate anybody? Be careful how you answer. Yes, he does.

Yes, he does. It's true, God is love, but because God is also righteous and holy, that even requires him to hate some.

Now, that might not sit well with people. they like to think that God's love is a blanket over everybody, and that the psalmist said, do I not hate those that hate thee?

Hate is a disdain for, a distaste for, an abhorrence of, a dislike, a strong dislike. for example, God clearly stated that he hated the Canaanites and their actions.

[35 : 08] It's there. Read it. And he commanded the Jews to exterminate them.

Now, how can you possibly justify that? to wipe out an entire group of people? This was to be a national action.

Israel, as a nation, was to hate another nation, the Canaanites, because of their extreme wickedness against God. because the nation of the Canaanites was God's enemy, Israel was to look upon them as their enemies and hate them to the point of exterminating them as God had commanded.

This was the basis for the commandment in the Mosaic Law. It was never intended to be used by individual Jews as grounds for exercising personal hatred, animosity, and enmity toward their fellow man on an individual basis.

Jesus said that was not the proper interpretation of the righteousness of this commandment. It had to do with a national foreign policy toward another nation that God considered his enemy and had nothing to do with the personal animosity toward a fellow Jew or Gentile.

[36 : 35] And some of these whom Israel was called upon to annihilate were people who, the expression is used, they caused their children to pass through the fire.

And what that meant was these people were into human sacrifice, and it was the sacrifice of their own children. Some of these people had such a warped understanding of providence that they thought, if you want to have blessings of the womb, you sacrifice your children.

It's almost like planting a seed. If you want to get multiple fruit, you have to plant the seed. In this case, the seed was their own children.

And the reason they did it was to get more children. Now, is that a perverted way of thinking, or what? Of course it is. What do you attribute to that?

What you attribute to that is that man is a fallen creature, he has a fallen intellect, he thinks and reasons and uses logic with a warped mind. And when somebody is operating and functioning and acting with a warped mind, almost anything is possible.

[37 : 55] And that's what we've got today. People thinking with a warped mind. The intellect has fallen as much as we are. Then Christ is going to give examples in other areas, too.

Now, for the few moments that we have left, I want to give you some wonderful insight from the pen of Dr. George Lamsa about this non-resistance.

And you've got to bear in mind that Jesus is addressing the setting, the cultural setting, at the present time wherein he was living and functioning among these people.

As he talked to these people, it was as if today. He wasn't talking in terms of this being all transferred 2,000 years hence so that it would make perfect sense to an audience in Springfield, Ohio in the year 2013.

He was talking to those who constituted his present audience at that time. He spoke their language about their customs, their mores, their values, their understanding, everything else.

[39 : 02] That's what you've got to keep in mind. And Dr. Lamza is able to address this.

And by his being a Syrian, so what makes him an authority on the Bible if he wasn't even a Jew, but a Syrian? Well, let me just remind you of a couple of things about Syria.

By the way, the city of Damascus, and I've mentioned this before, but let me throw it in the makeup again. The city of Damascus is the oldest continually inhabited city in the entire world.

Older than Jerusalem. Continually inhabited city in the world. This is the city to which the Apostle Paul, or Saul of Tarsus, was traveling when he had his Damascus Road experience.

He was going to the nation of Syria, the capital of which is Damascus. Syria has been involved in a love-hate relationship with Israel for thousands of years.

[40 : 14] These people have had some terrible blood baths back and forth. And they've had some alliances over the years. There is no place like the Mideast for trying to understand or unravel the political scene that is taking place there.

It is a mess, and it is so different and so radical from anything else anywhere in the world. There is no place like this. And this is one of the reasons they are always at each other. These people are always fighting.

And 99% of them are Muslims. And those who aren't Muslims are Jews. But there is the Sunni Muslim and the Shia Muslim. And there the twain shall meet.

They hate each other passionately, yet they are all Muslims. But they come from two different branches. And Israel is in the mix. And they have, well, let me give you some examples.

Remember when Abraham made his trek from Ur of the Chaldees and came up north into Syria? And then eventually over, and then way down south to Beersheba in Israel?

[41 : 21] When he stopped in Syria, that's when his father died. And then he took up his trek and came down into the promised land.

But you know who he came with? He came with a man by the name of Eliezer. And Eliezer was a slave, servant. Abraham purchased him. He was Syrian.

And until Abraham had his first child, this Eliezer stood in line to inherit everything that Abraham had. And he was a very, very wealthy man. So it goes all the way back to Eliezer.

Remember Naaman, the Syrian general? He was like the commander-in-chief of all the forces of Syria. He had leprosy. Remember?

And he came down into Israel. This is in 2 Kings chapter 5. And Elisha told him to go out and dip himself in the Jordan River seven times. And he did. And God performed a miracle.

[42 : 17] And his flesh came up as clean and as pure as a baby's. Read this fascinating, fascinating account in 2 Kings chapter 5. Naaman was Syrian.

Saul of Tarsus was on his way there. Remember in Matthew 15 where Jesus encountered the Syrophenician woman? She was Syrian. She was also Canaanite from that area.

And she was the one that begged that he would come and heal her daughter. And Jesus said, it's not fit to give children's meat to the dogs.

And she was not a Jew. She was one whom the Jews considered to be dogs. And we've looked at that before from a dispensational standpoint. We won't go into it.

Genesis 25. This might surprise you. But you remember Laban, Jacob's crooked uncle? Well, Jacob was crooked too.

[43 : 17] J. Vernon McGee used to say of Jacob, Jacob was so crooked when they buried him they had to screw him into the ground. That's pretty crooked. But you know where he learned his crookedness and his cheating and conniving?

He learned it from his uncle Laban. And Laban, Laban was a brother of Isaac.

No. Abraham, Isaac. Yeah, he was a brother. I got my genealogists mixed up. Anyway, this was the man for whom Jacob had to work seven years.

And he thought he was working for Rachel. And Laban pulled the old switcheroo. And he ended up with Leah.

And then he labored seven more years for the wife that he loved. And that was Rachel. Well, Laban was a Syrian. In 2 Samuel verses chapters 8 through 10, David, the king, would be fighting against Syrian.

[44 : 28] And Syria is mentioned many, many times. Sometimes it's called Aramea in 1 and 2 Kings. And it's found over 75 times in the Old Testament.

So these are very strategic people. And I say all that to say this. The Syrian culture, the way people live, and did things.

The kind of houses they lived in, the kind of food they lived in, it was virtually identical between Syria and Israel. They were neighbors. Even though they had a religion that was very different in that the Jew was Jewish and monotheistic, the Syrians were pretty much pagan.

But they still ate the same kind of food, lived in the same kind of quarters, used the same kind of animals, had the same kind of problems, faced the same kind of issues, had the same kind of solutions.

They were part and parcel of those people. And one lived just like the other did. Apart, of course, from the fact that the Jew kept the Sabbath and had kosher diets, etc. But let me just share this with you.

[45 : 36] I've only got a couple of moments and I want to close this. He says here, to the text, this is Dr. Lamza, to the text, Matthew 5, 39, I say unto you that you resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

This is an entirely different twist on this thing. Listen to this. The term evil here means injustice. In the east, which is where Israel and Syria are, or the Mideast, people are forced to do hard labor.

And let me just inject something here, if I may, quickly. There was no middle class. When Jesus was here, middle class was virtually non-existent. There were the very few who were very wealthy.

There weren't very many of them, but they were very wealthy. And the vast majority of everyone who was left could well be considered poor or in the poverty level.

These people had to labor like everything just to scrape out food for the day. And by the way, everybody was paid by the day. If you worked as a laborer for someone, you received your money at the end of that day.

[46 : 49] And if there was no work, then of course there was no pay. He says those in power generally oppress the poor. And why do people who are in power take advantage of the poor and oppress them?

The answer is because they can. Simple as that. Because they can. Property is confiscated unjustly. Resistance in such cases generally results in heavier burdens, violence, and even murder.

Non-resistance. Non-resistance is the only weapon with which the poor can defend themselves. Now that doesn't make sense, does it?

Non-resistance is the only way the poor can defend themselves. But when you don't have anything with which to defend yourself, you have no arms, no weapons, no ability to use them, no access to lawyers or court or anything like that, what are you going to do?

How are you going to retaliate? How are you going to fight back? You can't. Because if you do, you will pay a very dear price. That's the rationale behind this.

[47 : 58] Non-resistance is the only weapon with which the poor can defend themselves. Politicians, government officials, and rich men are always friendly and kind toward those who willingly carry their burdens without complaining.

On the other hand, those who offer resistance are treated as rebels and made to pay heavy penalties. The reference here is probably to government officials and soldiers who misuse their authority, but against whom resistance is futile.

This counsel did not refer to resisting attacks made by bandits and murderers or somebody breaking into your home with intent of doing you bodily harm or raping your daughter or your wife.

It doesn't mean that you're supposed to turn the other cheek to them and say, well, here's my daughter. I've got a younger daughter. Would you like to have her too? Of course not. That's stupidity. That's not what it's saying at all. Jesus is offering a strategy and he's saying, in effect, you can't fight City Hall alone.

You have no weapon. But non-resist. And you know, this is the whole rationale that Mahatma Gandhi used to gain freedom for India from British rule.

[49 : 22] And you remember who picked up on it? Martin Luther King Jr. implemented the very same strategy in the freedom marches when they went for peaceful non-resistance.

justice. And Dr. King insisted that people not retaliate and not lash out when the authorities turned the hoses on them, when they set the guard dogs on them.

Down in the south, he insisted that they not fight back, that they not arm themselves with weapons or clubs and fight back, that they peacefully submit themselves, put out their hands, let them put the handcuffs on them, take them to jail.

That was the non-resistance movement. And eventually, it won the day. What would have happened if they had stood up, retaliated, armed themselves, fought back at those crowds?

What would have happened? I'll tell you what would have happened. Civil War. It would have broken out all over. It would have been black against white all over. But when there was non-resistance, how can you escalate the situation?

[50 : 42] That's the dynamic of the non-resistant movement. It is designed to prevent the escalation of hostility.

You just don't put up a defense. You just submit. Then there's no fight. There's nothing to fight because there's no retaliation and no resistance.

And eventually, the day was won. And the civil rights legislation was passed. And ignorant statements by such austere bodies as our own Supreme Court, who rendered a verdict that says black people are not really full-fledged legitimate human beings.

There's something less than that. That a black man isn't worth what a white man is. And it took a hundred years to reverse that.

But it was reversed. And it wasn't reversed through a race war or a civil war. Bottom line was, it was reversed in the civil rights legislation allowing blacks to vote, for instance.

[52 : 02] The equal opportunity thing, which many think has gone to an extreme the other way, but that's a different issue. That's how all of this came about. And you know where the basis for it is?

It's right here. Right here. I don't know that this is where Mahatma Gandhi got it, but I do know that this is where Dr. Martin Luther King got it. And from Gandhi.

So all of this is part of the same package. Well, I've run out of time. I really want to deal with that passage in Matthew or in Romans chapter 12, because that is just really fascinating.

And when your enemy is hungry, feed him. And when he's thirsty, give him to drink. For in so doing, you will heap coals of fire on his head.

What in the world does that mean? Well, let me tell you what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean you give him to drink and you give him food and the end result will be you really get back at that sucker and it'll just be like dumping hot coals of fire on his head.

[53 : 15] You know what's wrong with that interpretation? It is completely contrary to the spirit of what we're talking about. Because if you're going to dump hot coals on somebody's head, that is punitive.

There's no blessing there. That is punitive. So, what does that mean? And we'll look into the mind of the Mideasterner and I think you'll be pleasantly surprised and pleased with what it means.

Would you pray with me, please? Father, these are issues that are just far removed from our understanding because of the time and place in which they were given, the way the world was 2,000 years ago and what people had to deal with.

And yet, there are really important positive attitudes that come through. And they apply for every dispensation. We recognize the tendency to retaliate out of vengeance, out of a desire to get even because someone hurts us.

We want to hurt them back. And that's man's way of dealing with the issue, but it's not your way. And for every dispensation, there is a methodology to be employed by people who know and love the Savior.

[54 : 36] And we are to mimic his attitude, who being reviled, reviled not in return, but submitted himself to those who abused him.

This is not a pleasant kind of strategy. It's not something that we would admire, but it is something that you've called upon us to do because we are to follow.

In his steps. And yet, we know that our Lord demands nothing from us that he has not provided us with the ability to produce.

And we want to know more about that. So it can impact our lives in a personal way. The way we relate to our neighbors and our friends. All too often, our behavior and our decorum is just like the world's.

And they can't tell the difference. We trust that you will use these texts and this truth to show us how to really reflect the nature and character of Christ and cause others to say, behold, how they love one another.

[55 : 53] And they even love people who don't like them. Thank you for the truth that is here. And we look to you for more of the same in Christ's name. Amen.