

Christ Taught Non-Resistance

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Christ Taught Non-Resistance (*Matthew 5:39; 26:52*)

Christ Taught and Practiced Physical Resistance (*Luke 22:36; Jn. 2:15*)

It is interesting that people who claim God contradicts Himself seem to believe He must respond to every situation in exactly the same manner, no matter what the circumstances, whereas, Holy Scripture proclaims the following fundamental truth.

To everything (i.e. every situation) there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: ²a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; ³a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; ⁴a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance (Eccl. 3:1-4; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. note in parenthesis).

In a similar theme, it will be established in this study that there is a time to resist and a time not to resist. The challenge for human beings is to discern which course of action is the most wise and beneficial in any given situation. Christ explained this principle in the following scripture.

Behold, I (Christ) send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore become discerning like the snakes, and pure (innocent, spotless) like the doves (Mt. 10:16; RNT; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Christ expected his followers to exercise wisdom in order to take whatever action was most appropriate, even when they were under threat

from enemies. Sometimes, it would involve standing their ground, while other times it was more expedient to leave a dangerous situation for the furtherance of God's work. The following section of scripture is an example of God's servants holding their ground, or resisting.

And when they (captain of the temple with officers; cf. vs. 26) had brought them (Peter and the apostles), they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, ²⁸saying, 'Did we (chief priests) not strictly command you not to teach in this name (ref. to the name of Jesus Christ)? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood on us!' ²⁹**Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'** ³⁰The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. ³¹Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are His (Almighty God the Father's) witnesses to these things, and so also is the holy spirit which God has given to those who obey Him.' ³³When they (chief priests) heard this, they were furious and took counsel to kill them (Ac. 5:27-33; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

In contrast, the next scriptural example involved two of God's servants who felt it wiser not to resist, and they left town before being captured and perhaps killed. This scene took place in Thessalonica following Paul's preaching in the area.

But the Jews took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring him out to the people. ⁶But when they did not find them (Paul and Silas), they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, 'These who have

turned the world upside down have come here too. ⁷Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king – Jesus.’ ⁸And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. ⁹So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. ¹⁰Then **the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea** (Ac. 17:5-10a; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

So these two situations were handled very differently but the outcome was similar in the sense that none of God’s servants were killed. Peter and some of the apostles resisted under threats to their lives and lived, while Paul and Silas departed to avoid capture and possible death at the hands of a mob. With these examples in mind, the scriptures that are used by some to accuse God of contradicting Himself will be examined.

But I (Christ) say to you, do not stand against the evil, but whoever strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also (Mt. 5:39; RNT; Ed. note in parenthesis).

The context of the scripture above is dealing with those who have committed an act worthy of compensation because Christ’s introduction, in the text that follows, is referring to ordinances associated with compensating someone who is injured.

You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth’ (Mt. 5:38; RNT; bold sentence denotes OT quote).

The principle, quoted in Matthew 5:38, is still applied today when an injured person is compensated by insurance companies, or court order, for damages they sustained in an accident or intentional attack. The original command was

meant to teach that injured people should receive compensation fitting the damage that was inflicted upon them. However, it was not meant to be taken literally (i.e. removing a perpetrator’s eye or tooth).

But wisdom needs to be exercised in situations where an evil person is out to harm someone. Even though the injured person may be innocent of any wrongdoing, that individual can still lose their case if it goes to court. This is why Christ used figurative language in Matthew 5:40-42 to emphasize that his followers should be prepared to forgive their enemies quickly.

For while you are going with your opponent (enemy) before the ruler (local authority), work hard to be released from him, so that he may not drag you down to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the court officer, and the court officer throw you (the innocent person) into jail. ⁵⁹**I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have given back the last lepton** (the smallest coin in use among the Jews) (Lk. 12:58-59; RNT; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The next scripture that some use to claim that God’s word contradicts itself is dealing with the principle that two wrongs do not make a right.

Then Jesus said to him (Peter; cf. Jn. 18:10), **‘Put back your sword into its place; for all those who take up the sword, by the sword shall destroy themselves’** (Mt. 26:52; RNT; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Christ did not want his disciples acting like the very thugs that were in the process of arresting him (cf. Prov. 21:7). Besides Christ’s followers needed to, first and foremost, rely on Almighty God to protect them. This is why Christ mentioned what he did regarding the fact he could ask his heavenly Father for twelve legions (72,000) angels if it was necessary, at that

moment, to fight against his enemies. However, Christ had already determined not to resist because he was in the process of fulfilling the very purpose for which he became a flesh and blood human being (cf. Mt. 26:45).

The next scripture, that is used to accuse God of contradicting Himself, has to do with the ability of Christ's disciples to defend themselves, if deemed necessary, especially now that Christ was about to die at the hands of his enemies and the disciple's lives would become more difficult (cf. Mt. 9:15).

And he (Christ) said to them (his disciples), "**But now, those having a money belt, take it up, likewise also a leather bag; and those not possessing a sword** (because it hadn't been necessary to use one up until now), **let him sell his garment and buy one** (Lk. 22:36; RNT; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The final scripture, that supposedly contradicts other texts on this subject, is dealing with Christ's zeal for righteous conduct. When it came to his Father's temple, Christ's actions, regarding overturning the tables of the moneychangers, seem to shock some people because they have an erroneous image of Christ that is based on various paintings, and other icons, that depict him as a thin, pale-faced, effeminate looking individual, instead of the healthy robust man that could endure forty days of fasting without any food or water (cf. Mt. 4:1-2). Also of note, as Jesus Christ was a carpenter, which included handling heavy stones, he would have been very strong and in excellent physical shape.

And having made a whip of small cords, he (Christ) cast them all (the moneychangers) out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen and the moneychangers, and he poured out the money and overturned the tables (Jn. 2:15; RNT; Ed. notes in parentheses).

So there are no apparent contradictions in the scriptural references used in this study. Instead, God's people have examples of being prepared to quickly forgive their enemies, if the situation warrants it, to driving out enemies as Christ did in the incident involving the moneychangers at the temple in Jerusalem. Wisdom is required in order to know when to resist one's enemies and when not to resist them. For those who are unable to discern the difference, they need to ask God for the wisdom that is necessary. However, everyone who is determined to criticize God, and accuse Him of contradicting Himself, will never obtain this wisdom.

The fear (proper respect) of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all who do His commandments. His praise endures forever (Ps. 111:10; cf. Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

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