**On “Turn the other cheek”**

When Jesus was on earth, and in his sermon on the mount, he said, “Do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.” So even in the English language, we have the saying, “Turn the other cheek.”

What does Jesus mean by this? If a stranger enters our home to harm our family, are we to turn the other cheek? Or if an enemy attacks this country, are we to turn the other cheek? How can we live by this saying? What about “an eye for an eye”?

Every verse in the scripture needs to be studied in its context. What is the context of Jesus’ teaching here? He also says, “If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two.” This whole passage is in the context of persecution. It was the Romans who could force a Jew to carry a heavy pack for a mile. And it was in the context of religious persecution that Jesus taught, “Turn the other cheek.”

But there are at least three times you *don’t* turn the other cheek: 1) When a child slaps a parent. (You may turn the other “cheek”—but it will be the child’s back one.) 2) When a criminal slaps a cop. 3) And when a student slaps a teacher.

There is an order of submission and authority in society that we all know should not be broken. If a child slaps a parent, we all believe that the child should be punished. And if a criminal would slap a policeman, that criminal should also be punished. What punishment would we measure out for a student who would slap a teacher?

The same God who said, “Love your neighbor as yourself” also said, “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, blow for blow, stripe for stripe, life for life.” In society there must be order, and God established this requirement: the punishment must exactly match the crime. Here is the reason for corporeal or even capital punishment. Some people can understand nothing but punishment.

I am a minister and a college professor. However, if any stranger should come into my house, intent on harming my family, I would stop him with deadly force, if I could. We are responsible for protecting others, especially our families. The Apostle Paul said, “Anyone who does not care for his family is worse than an unbeliever.” Even Jesus drove out the money-changers when they invaded his house! (John 2:17, especially)

So when Christians are attacked for being Christians, we must not resist. We must not strike back at an evil person. We must allow ourselves to be hurt—and even for our family to be hurt. Religious persecution is Jesus’ meaning. Mohandes Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. learned this—and changed the world. Non-violence is a world-changer. We as Christians must accept whatever punishment we are given by the unbelievers. As our example, Jesus did not strike back; we also must not.