

The Right to Self-Protection: Comparing Beatitude & Backpack

By David Lee Burris

POWER IMBALANCE: PASSIVE

Jesus Christ @Countering Dehumanization. Matthew 5: 39-42
Jesus Advocated Assertive Non-Violence in Turning the Other
Cheek Central Illustration. Acting This Out Gets to The Point:

You can be struck on the right cheek only by an overhand blow or with a backhand blow from the right hand. But in that world people did not use the left hand to strike people. The left hand was 'reserved' for 'unseemly use.' Thus, being struck on the right cheek meant one had been backhanded with the right hand. Given the social structure of the day a superior hit an inferior, whereas one fought social equals with fists. This means the parable presupposes a setting in which a superior is beating a peasant.

What Should the Peasant Do in Such Situation?

Verse 39 – “Turn to Him the Other Cheek.”

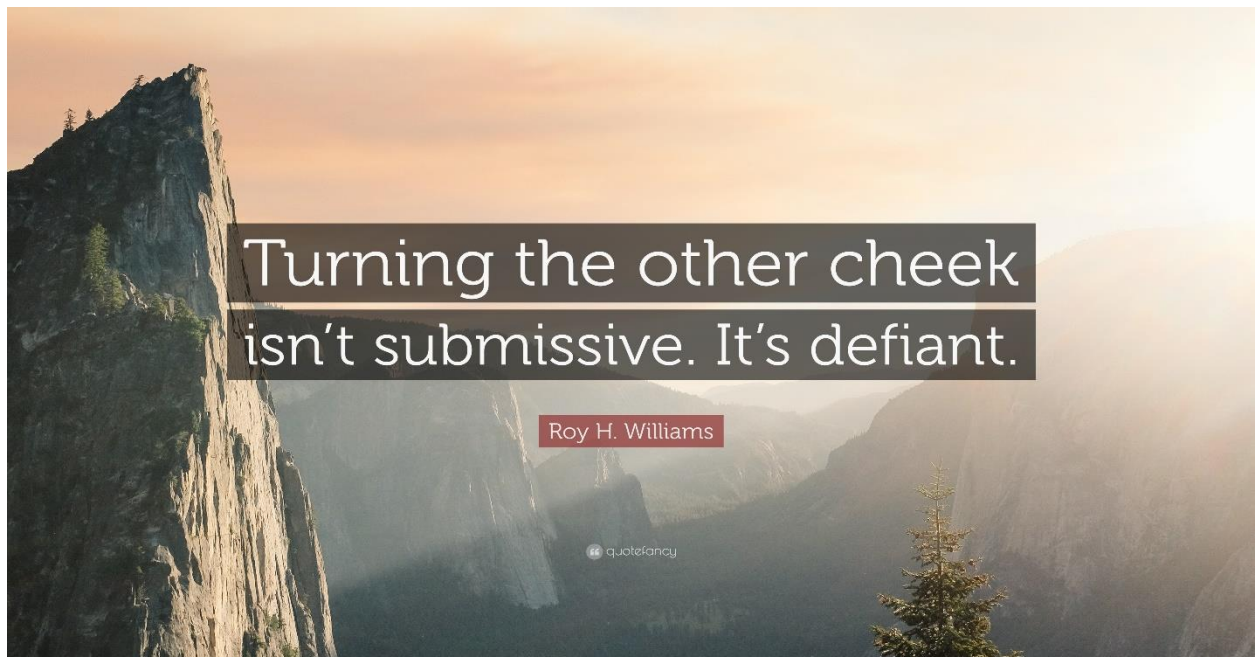
What Would Be the Probable Outcome of Following This Advice? The only way the superior could continue the beating would be with an overhand blow with the fist – which would be treating the peasant as an equal.

Perhaps the beating would not have been stopped by this act but it would have been very disconcerting. He would only have continued the beating treating the peasant as a social peer!

Verse 40 – “Let Him Have Your Cloak Also.”

Under civil law a coat could be confiscated for non-payment of debt – there was not any bankruptcy protection back then. For the poor, the coat then served as a blanket at night. In that world, the only other garment typically worn by a peasant was an inner garment, a cloak. In advising to give the cloak as well – Jesus is saying to strip naked! *In that [honor-shame society] world, nakedness was a **shame to the person observing it.***

These were potent methods to confound and expose social injustice. In reality, this new way, was a radical approach to empowerment. - Internet



NON-INJURIOUS: NON-RESISTANCE

Nuanced Difference. I think Christians often wonder what it means to turn the other cheek. Jesus taught in [Matthew 5](#), “You have heard that it was said ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’, but I say to you, ‘Do not resist the one who is evil, but if anyone slaps on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.’”

If we pay careful attention to the wording of that verse, Jesus is teaching about turning the other cheek has a specific meaning. If I’m facing someone and I slap that person on the right cheek, it would require me to slap the person with the back of my hand to make contact with the person’s right cheek.

So, I think what it means is that Jesus is telling us not to hit back when someone slaps us an insult. I don’t think it is really talking about escaping or defending ourselves against a violent attack that would do us bodily harm or even kill us. – Internet Search

Minor Affront vs. Physical Assault

We are not to extrapolate the ignoring of the minor though insulting affront, such as a slap, to mean that we are therefore to ignore every kind of affront and injury and never defend ourselves against physical or potentially deadly assault.

For example, when Jesus was slapped by one of the officers of the high priest when on trial before the Sanhedrin's kangaroo court, ([John 18:19-24](#)), Jesus did not "turn the other cheek," but rebuked the man for his judicially illegal act. Of course, He did not take any physical revenge. The Gospels record numerous other slaps inflicted on Jesus during this night, to which He did not respond at all ([Matthew 27:67-68](#), parallels in Mark and Luke).

It is true that Jesus did not resist the armed assailants who came to arrest Him in Gethsemane, and rebuked Peter for using violence to defend Jesus ([Matthew 26:51-54](#), parallels). In that particular case, however, it was God's perfect will for Jesus to submit, be tried and condemned as part of the plan of human redemption, so it does not serve as a universally applicable pattern for us. Furthermore, Jesus was merely being arrested at this point, and the disciples had no sure notion that Jesus faced execution. Killing a man merely to prevent arrest was an excessive reaction to the perceived danger.

Not only so, but from a human perspective, resistance by the poorly-armed band of eleven disciples against so large a body of well-armed soldiers was utterly futile, and vastly inferior to the superior force of angels Jesus could have summoned had He wanted to.

Jesus' words, "All who take the sword will perish by the sword," ([Matthew 26:52](#)) has a proverbial quality about it (as a general truism, but not an absolute declaration of universal truth), and seems to address specifically those who, as a matter of course, resort to violence to force their will on others (robbers, gangs, bandits, and the like). It does not seem to directly refer to those who would defend themselves against violence imposed on them.

Some pacifists and "non-resisters" would insist that Jesus' words are plain: "Don't resist an evil person," ([Matthew 5:39](#)), which they would take to mean at all times and under all circumstances, that is, we should never defend ourselves with physical force, weapons, *no matter what*. However, if they really took literally and at face value the admonition (v. 39)—"Do not resist an evil person," then they would never lock their houses or cars, remove their car keys from the ignition switch, or conceal their bank ATM password. And of course, they do not do these things. They do "resist evil persons" in matters involving property crimes. And if one may legitimately resist evil in matters of property, how much more may one resist evil when threatened in one's health, well-being, safety and life?

Before Pilate ([John 18:36](#)), Jesus explained why His followers did not engage in violence to protect Him (Peter excepted!)—His kingdom was not and is not and never will be part of this present world-system. It was then – as today - a strictly spiritual kingdom, a rule over submissive human hearts. It is indeed wrong—and impossible—to spread Christ's spiritual kingdom using physical weapons ([2 Corinthians 10:3-5](#)). Rather, by the "sword of the Spirit - the word of God" - the kingdom is furthered ([Eph 6:17](#)). Jesus does not expressly denounce warfare conducted by government, which does wield weapons to punish evil-doers ([Romans 13:4](#)); this can reasonably be understood to include national defense against foreign invaders and aggressors. It is noteworthy that nowhere does the Bible denounce the "profession of arms," that is, serving in the military, as a thing inherently evil. In a very telling account, John the Baptist ([Luke 3:14](#)) gives ethical guidelines for soldiers to follow in the exercise of their professional responsibilities, but doesn't denounce wholesale profession of arms as evil *per se*. Likewise Cornelius, a Roman military officer (Acts 10), is nowhere told to abandon his military career as being by its very nature in conflict with a Christian lifestyle.

Paul speaks to the matter of taking revenge in [Romans 12:17-21](#). Verse 18's exhortation to be at peace with all men has the significant qualifier, "as much as it depends on you." There are times when threats and violence are imposed on us unprovoked, and in such cases we are not required to be "at peace with all men." – *Doug Kutilek*

FORCE IMBALANCE: EQUALIZE

WHAT DOES LUKE 22:36 REALLY MEAN?

He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one."

Luke 22:36



Connect Us
COMMENTARIES

Luke 22:36 - Meaning of If You Do Not Have a Sword, Sell Your Cloak & Buy One

Luke 22:36

“He said to them, ‘But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.’”

Explanation and Connect Us Commentary of Luke 22:36

Breaking Down the Key Parts of Luke 22:36

#1 “He said to them,”

After informing Peter of his impending faithlessness, Jesus turns his attention to the rest of the group. It was time to prepare them for his, and their greatest trial.

#2 “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag;”

The particular lesson that Jesus sought to teach his disciples when he sent them on previous missionary assignments was that they needed to carry nothing and to trust God for provision. But this was different. They would still be required to trust God to provide, but he would provide through the purse they already had & the bag they already would carry. The main purpose of the speech seems to be that it was time for Jesus to suffer, which would dramatically impact the nature of their role.

#3 “and if you do not have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.”

Again, things were becoming dangerous. We can at least assume that Jesus does not call us to total pacifism at all costs. In a moment they would point out that they had two swords already. This tells us that a) Jesus hadn’t prohibited them from carrying swords up to then, and b) When Jesus said, “That’s enough” (Luke 22:38) it shows that he is not expecting them to go to literal war, but could be an exasperated statement.

VERSE 38 OF DOUBLE APPLICATION

This Statement Is Not Only Forward Looking To The Great Commission But Also Backward Looking To Prophecy Fulfillment; Verses 36 & 37 Establish The Context of Verse 38: Swords Were Required At Jesus' Arrest For Him To *Be Numbered With The Transgressors.*

Most importantly, verse 37 tells us *why* the apostles needed swords that particular night. Jesus said, "For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me..." That first word, "for" is incredibly important. It is the Greek word "gar." **It ties verses 36 and 37 together and it assigns purpose.**

The reason Jesus wanted His apostles to have swords that night was **so that a particular Scripture would be fulfilled.** The Scripture the swords would fulfill was the prophecy of Isaiah 53:12, "And he was numbered with the transgressors."

Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

If a thief be found breaking up,.... An house, in order to steal money, jewels, household goods, &c. or breaking through any fence, hedge, or wall of any enclosure, where oxen, or sheep, or any other creatures are, in order to take them away: the Targum of Jonathan is, "if in the hole of a wall (or window of it) a thief be found; "that is, in the night, as appears from the following verse, "if the sun", &c. to which this is opposed, as Aben Ezra observes; some render it, with a digging instrument (x); and it is a Jewish canon (y), that "if anyone enter with a digging instrument: he is condemned on account of his end; "his design, which is apparent by the instrument found upon him; for, as Maimonides (z) observes," it is well known, that if anyone enters with a digging instrument, that he intends, if the master of the house opposes him to deliver his goods out of his power, that he will kill him, and therefore it is lawful to kill him; but it does not signify whether he enters with a digging instrument, either by the way of the court, or roof;"

and be smitten that he die be knocked down with a club, by the master of the house, or any of his servants, or be run through with a sword, or be struck with any other weapon, to hinder him from entrance and carrying off any of the goods of the house, and the blow be mortal: there shall no blood be shed for him: **as for a man that is murdered; for to kill a man when breaking into a house, and, by all appearance, with an intention to commit murder, if resisted, in defense of a man's self, his life and property, was not to be reckoned murder, and so not punishable with death: or, "no blood" shall be "unto him" (a); shall be imputed to him, the man that kills the thief shall not be chargeable with his blood, or suffer for shedding it; because his own life was risked**, and it being at such a time, could call none to his assistance, nor easily discern the person, nor could know well where and whom he struck.

(x) "cum perfossorio", Pagninus; "cum instrumento perfosserio", Tigurine version. (y) Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 8. sect. 6. (z) Comment. in ib. (a) "non ei sanguines", Montanus, Vatablus, Drusius.

The Christian & Killing: Killing in Self Defense

By Ron Howes

The real burr under the saddle of the pacifist seems to be his unqualified position on the commandment “thou shalt not kill!”

We hear from the scratching of other pens that “God is not a respecter of persons” and, His law applies to all! How then, can we say that the policeman’s act of killing a man robbing a store is not a sin, but it would be a sin for a Christian to be a policeman and do the same thing? That argument looks like this:

1. It’s a righteous act for a policeman to kill in the line of duty.
2. Christians may not under any circumstances kill.
3. Therefore, it is a sin for a Christian to commit a righteous act.

I accuse my pacifist brethren of consistently applying a double standard here. But, we continue to hear, “Jesus said, thou shalt not kill!” And, while we agree the United States is not Israel, we must compare apples with apples. The law God gave Israel is a model for civil government and stands as a near perfect system for administering the civil affairs of men. In a country without a standing police force or professional army from Moses to Saul, God allowed a limited and restricted amount of personal vengeance, vigilante style, in the “avenger of blood.”

We do not, however, confuse this with self-defense. It is one thing to discover the body of a slain loved one and to pick up your hunting rifle and go looking for the killer, and a legitimate self-defense situation.

One is vengeance with malice, and the other merely self-protection with fear as the motivating factor, not malice. Both God's law and our civil law recognize and condone this kind of stop-gap justice.

To Kill Or Not to Kill

The God who said, "Thou shalt not kill" also said "if you kill the thief breaking in there shall be no blood-guiltiness for him" (Exodus 22:2). To date, no one has offered to debate whether or not God's definition of bloodguilt has changed from Old Testament to New Testament. A roof cave in caused by builder neglect could cause the execution of the builder if anyone died from the cave in, but to kill in self-defense carried no guilt under God's application of "Thou shalt not kill." Here's the argument:

1. God said, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13).
2. Killing in self-defense carried no guilt (Ex. 22:2).
3. Therefore, killing in self-defense does not violate the law.

That inspiration has made a distinction between killing that carried bloodguilt and killing that is commanded, encouraged, or sanctioned with no bloodguilt is apparent in the original tongue. While a phoneus is certainly a killer, not all killing is phoneuo. The word inspiration chose to transmit the mind of God in Deut. 5, and Exodus 20, is rahtzach, the Hebrew term for murder, as opposed to accidental death, death in war, or the killing of animals.

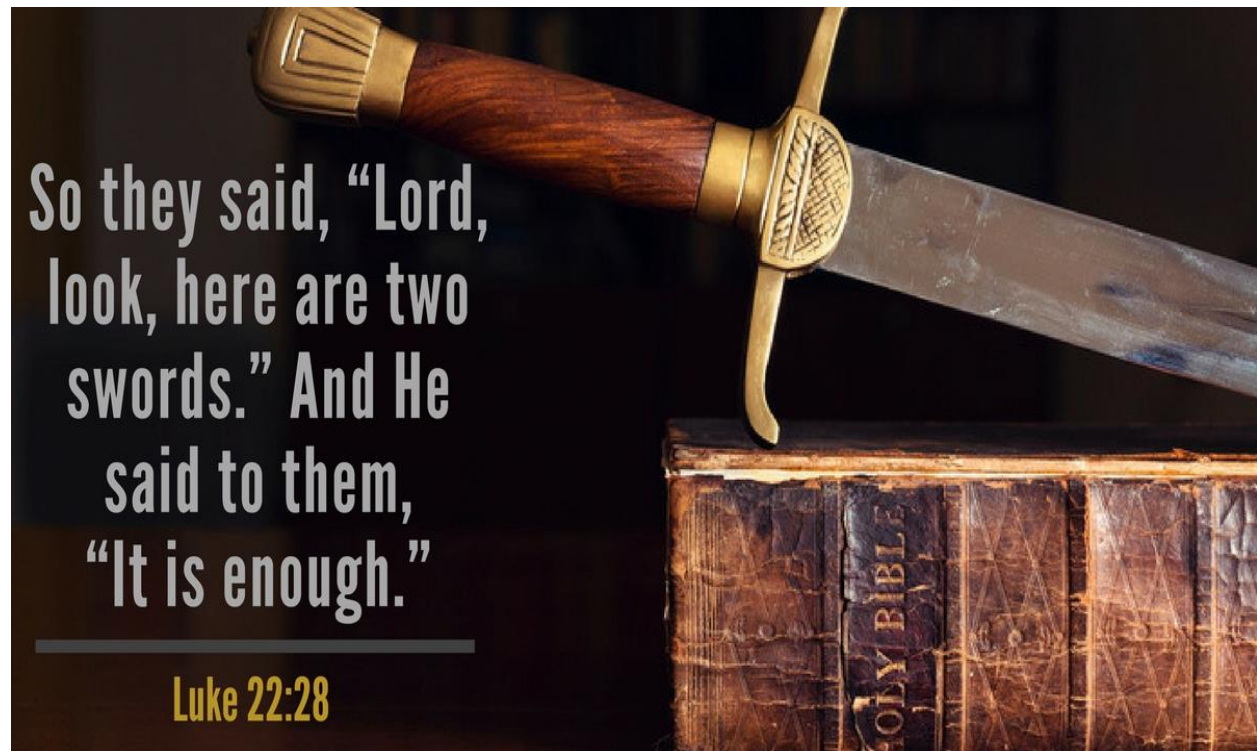
This distinction is more closely seen when the student realizes that the God who said thou shalt not rahtzach, commanded the execution of a variety of criminals, including murderers, rapists, negligent contractors, and unyielding children. Was God commanding Israel to disobey the sixth commandment? Does God ever command us to sin?

Jesus Himself chose an equally distinctive term in saying thou shalt not phoneuo (Matt. 5:21). According to Strong, phoneuo means “to be a murderer,” (p. 76), according to Thayer (p. 657), it means “to commit murder” and W.E. Vine (p. 291) said, “Pheneuo, to murder, akin tophoneus, a murderer.” Need we also define what murder is!? Jesus nowhere circumvents the responsibility of the Christian to kill if it is necessary in the protection of his own life or family.

On another occasion Jesus commanded the disciples to arm for self-defense (Luke 22:36). In the ensuing confrontation with the guards, **he never condemned use of the sword, or reviled the disciples for having with them that which he had commanded them to possess.** The Lord who said “buy a sword” (Luke 22:36), said in reference to its use “suffer them thus far” (Luke 22:51). Let the interested reader ask himself the question, “How far, is thus far!” In answering that question, you will know under what circumstances Jesus will allow you to kill in defense of your family.

The scripture is de-textualized and warped which says turn the other cheek, if it is so stretched to mean that if a thief kills your son, do not resist, let him rape your wife also; and, so are the fruits of the doctrine of nonresistance. “As much as in you is, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18).

Truth Magazine XXII: 15, pp. 247-248
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“There are a number of passages of Scripture that encourage escaping from danger or even using force in self-defense, if necessary, and encourage us to defend other people against wrongful attacks. Jesus’s disciples carried swords, even after three years of traveling with Jesus. In the garden of Gethsemane, they had swords. Swords in the first century were used for self-defense. So, I think, there will be times in which self-defense measures taken to prevent us from suffering significant bodily harm can easily be justified.” - Crossway



MENNONITE MISINTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE HAS HAD TRAGIC CONSEQUENCE:

Mennonites de-literalize the physical swords of Luke 22:36 making Jesus' remarks not as regards a deterrent "sufficiency," but rather, frustration at the Apostles' false trust.

Terms:

Pacifism – “the doctrine that all violence is unjustifiable” (source = [Princeton Wordnet](#))

Nonresistance – “group refusal to resort to violence even in defense against violence” (source = [Princeton Wordnet](#))

Nonviolent Resistance – “peaceful resistance to a government by strike or refusing to cooperate” (source = [Princeton Wordnet](#))

Majority of Mennonites Fall Within the Range of Absolute to Active Pacifism

An **absolute pacifist** believes that it is never right to take part in violence - even for self-defense. An absolute pacifist would believe it is unethical to use violence even to save innocent lives.

A **conditional pacifist** believes that while violence is not the best answer, there may be situations where it becomes necessary. A conditional pacifist would believe that, while violence is a bad solution, it's less bad than the alternative in some situations. They might think it's OK to defend yourself or an innocent victim with violence or threats of violence.

A **selective pacifist** opposes certain types of violence, but is more permissive of others. A selective pacifist might believe that deadly weapons like guns and knives are inherently unethical, but the use of the body in martial arts is acceptable.

An **active pacifist** opposes taking personal violent action, but does not oppose the use of violence on the part of others - especially when used in defense of self or the innocent. An active pacifist may not fight, but might take part in activities in support of violence as a wartime conscientious objector.

“We have a Mennonite neighbor who practiced non-resistance under all circumstances. Some evil men found out about it and came into his home demanding to take sexual liberties with all his daughters. He did not resist but gave them his younger daughters as well. The men returned. His daughters became pregnant and bore little bastards. No man ever wanted them for wives. He stood by and watched the evil men strip and rape his daughters. It destroyed the family. They had to move so as to cease being used by evil men at their will. He was a fool. His doctrine was of the Devil. He should have risen up in righteous wrath and slain the enemy, like Joshua of old.

I have been struck and pushed and cursed for the gospel's sake. I have had my life threatened several times. I have been non-resistant in all cases, but when I came across a man raping a woman in the woods, I reached for my pistol and saved her life. To this day she is thankful that I was not a pacifist. She didn't need a spectator; she needed a deliverer.” – Religious Blogsite



The police should be here any minute.
Until then, let's talk about Jesus.

