

**SLIDE 1. ANCHORED: A Study of What We Believe and Why Teaching: Article 13: Love and Nonresistance**

*Sunday March 17, 2023*

APPETIZER

SLC FEEDBACK – f. Article 11 - Marriage, Singleness and Family...

For the past 25 years, my wife has been complaining about me not putting the cap back on the toothpaste. This anniversary, I decided to change this habit and make my wife happy.

For a week, I was diligent, always capping the toothpaste. I was expecting my wife to thank me, but she never did.

Finally, yesterday, while having dinner, she turned and looked at me and said, "What have you stopped brushing your teeth?!"

SLC FEEDBACK – f. Article 12 - Society and State...

A man suffered a serious heart attack while shopping in a store. The store clerks called 911 when they saw him collapse to the floor. The paramedics rushed the man to the nearest hospital where he had emergency open heart bypass surgery.

He awakened from the surgery to find himself in the care of nuns at the Catholic Hospital. A nun was seated next to his bed holding a clipboard loaded with several forms, and a pen.

She asked him how he was going to pay for his treatment.

"Do you have health insurance?" she asked.

He replied in a raspy voice, "No health insurance."

The nun asked, "Do you have any money in the bank?"

He replied, "No money in the bank."

"Do you have a relative who could help you with the payments?" asked the now somewhat frustrated nun.

He said, "I only have a spinster sister, and she is a nun."

The nun became quite agitated and responded tersely, "Nuns are not spinsters! Nuns are married to God."

The patient then replied, "Perfect. Send the bill to my brother-in-law."

Now onto Article 13 – Love and Nonresistance – or as we will refer to it in this teaching: Peacekeeping.

**SLIDE 2. How would you describe a "peacekeeper?"**

## MAIN COURSE

Let me begin by saying this particular article (Article 13) has been debated for years – as to whether it is a proper biblical posture and so - as to whether or not it should be a part of our Confession of Faith.

Let's take a look at a few bible passages...

Jesus said...

**SLIDE 3. *"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for an eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also...***

**SLIDE 4. *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..."*** (Mt. 5:38-44).

So, Jesus takes OT commands (f. Exodus 21; Lev. 24) – to take retributive action – and contrasts it with his own command – to not return violence – AND – another OT command - to hate your enemy - and contrasts it with his own command – to love them and to pray for them.

So – at minimum – it is safe to say that just because violence was permitted in the OT (which, ironically, was in place to LIMIT violence) – that it gets a green light in the NT.

Just the opposite – it seems like Jesus commands – here - are against personal *and* civil violence.

On the one hand – Jesus talks about violence against an individual – and he commands against retaliation. On the other hand – Jesus talks about "eye for eye" – which was a civil law carried out and sanctioned by society.

So it seems that Jesus condemns both defensive and retributive justice – in self-defence and in defence of others.

Jesus says NOT TO resist the one who is evil – and to go so far as to open ourselves up to further insult. If this is true for us personally – then it logically extends to not defending others with violence for too.

Jesus tells us TO DO otherwise – to love our enemies and to pray for them – which is a positive way of saying – "Don't do violence to them!"

Obviously, harming others is not a way to show active Christian love :)

"But," we might say – OR – "What about..." we might say.

But the offenses Jesus talks about in Mt. 5 seem relatively minor – a slap, theft of a piece of clothing, walking an extra mile. What if it was attempted murder?

This is a great question.

So, in context, that slap isn't necessarily just a slap. The Greek word used here is picked up later in the gospel with a related word and it is equated with a much more forceful word.

When someone "slapped" Jesus and taunted him saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that "struck" (that's the related word) – Who is it that "struck" you?" (Mt. 26:67-68).

So, there's reason to believe that that slap is no small thing – even if it isn't attempted murder.

Furthermore, the context of this passage is the Mosaic principle "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." If someone damages an eye or knocks out a tooth, that's no small thing either!

In other words, Jesus seems to be saying that even if we are physically harmed – we should not return that harm.

So, we are forced to ask ourselves, "How can it be loving to harm someone else – even in self-defence?" and "To what degree is defensive violence about loving *myself* as opposed to loving my enemy?"

Jesus also said (to Pilate)...

**SLIDE 5. *My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place*** (Jn. 18:36).

Now, we could focus on that part where Jesus says his servants would "fight" to prevent his arrest – to try to justify violence of our own – but that would be to miss the point.

I think the point that Jesus is making is the opposite.

Jesus says the reason he did not use defensive violence was that his kingdom is not of this world – which is to say – does not act like this world.

His kingdom – of which Christians are citizens – is predicated on love and forgiveness – not violence of any sort.

It is an argument from large to small: If we are NOT to defend our kingdom against other nations or our king against his enemies – how could we use defensive violence for lesser purposes?

"But," we might say – OR – "What about..." we might say... Peter and the sword OR Jesus and the whip?!

Let's turn to those texts...

**SLIDE 6. *Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus' companions (Peter) reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear*** (Mt. 26:50-51).

Which might cause us to wonder, "Why was Peter carrying a sword in the first place?"

Also a great question! Which – for the sake of time – I will not answer in length – but I will say this – that the Greek word for "sword" here could also be understood as a "knife" (Gen. 22:10) – and whether sword or knife – neither have to necessarily be used for self defense but could be used as a tool for all kinds of different purposes – like – clearing a path or a camping area for Jesus and his missionary companions – or – to protect themselves against wildlife in their travels. But we digress...

**SLIDE 7. *"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword"*** (Mt. 26:52).

So, Jesus rebukes Peter for taking up his sword – even in defense of an innocent person, namely Jesus himself!

"But," we might say...

Jesus doesn't tell Peter to drop his sword and never touch it again. He just tells Peter to put his sword "back into its sheath." This would be like a Lieutenant telling his officer to holster his firearm – he means - put it away but keep it on your person.

But again – "Put your sword back in its place" is not the same thing as saying, "Have it ready to do violence."

OR – "What about..." we might say...

Not everyone who draws a sword dies by it. Surely there are any Samurais who "lived by the sword," but died of old age.

This, however, might be to take Jesus' words too literally.

So, we are forced to ask ourselves, "Is this story specific to the context?" OR "Is this story articulating a general principle?"

I suspect that it is probably both.

As a principle: When you use violence, you're likely to get it back, and you won't always be able to defend against it.

As applied to Peter: Put your sword away. If you use it now, you will die now!

Then there's Jesus and the whip...

**SLIDE 8. *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.***

**SLIDE 9. *So, he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.***

**SLIDE 10. *To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"*** (Jn. 2:13-16).

So, what do we have here?

Men selling animals for sacrifice – not bad – because Jews came from great distances to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem – and they needed to buy sacrificial animals near the temple.

But they were selling animals for sacrifice - in the outer court of the temple itself – not good – because that was the one place where Gentiles (non Jews) could seek God and pray!

This would be like us setting up barriers for people who don't know God or follow Jesus to come to church!

Not to mention that it is very likely the livestock merchants were charging too much for what they were selling and the money changers too much for currency exchange!

NEITHER OF WHOM should have been in the temple in the first place!

The temple is not a marketplace.

The temple is a place of worship.

But notice – Jesus made a whip and drove *all* from the temple – *all* what?

The *animals*: both sheep and cattle – with a whip Jesus fashioned from cords that wouldn't hurt the animals, but it would move them – and then their owners to retrieve them!

He did not drive *people* out with the whip.

Instead, he scattered coins, turned over tables, and told them to GET OUT!

NEVER doing violence to anyone!

He drove those desecrators from the sacred space – and made it possible for those seeking God to come and pray.

So, what do we do?

We tend to respond to conflict and violence either by raising our voice and striking back, or by avoiding the conflict and walking away or remaining uninvolved.

Christ, however, showed us a third way: peacekeeping.

In his ministry to seek and save the lost. And in his every day of living to show us how.

As Christ-ians - we are called to be peacemakers – which is more than passive, non-resistors.

**SLIDE 11. The word “peacemaker” combines the meaning of well-being or wholeness** (what we might otherwise call – SHALOM) **with the idea of action.**

A peacemaker is someone who actively intervenes in situations of personal and civil conflict to establish peace – in our homes, in our churches, in our communities, in our schools, work and play spaces, in our nation and in international disputes.

Peacemaking (respectfully) is not a mission of the UN.

Peacemaking is a mission of the church of Jesus Christ.

Jesus teaches that one of the ways to live as peacemakers is to refuse to retaliate with violence. But it is more than this.

Peacemaking is positive action: it involves loving people who hate us or who are our enemies and praying for them (Mt. 5:43-48), it involves being a non-escalating presence between escalated parties, it involves tearing down barriers of misunderstanding and prejudice, anger and hate, and to replace those barriers with bridges of acceptance, forgiveness, friendship, and love.

Because this is what God has done for us through Jesus Christ!

**SLIDE 12.** And so: ***Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God*** (Mt. 5:9, NRSV).

TAKEOUT

**SLIDE 13. Leader: Greater love has no one than this – to lay down your life for your neighbor. Jesus has left us His example, that we should follow in His steps.**

**SLIDE 14. Congregation: For Christ is our peace, who demolished all divisions and made us one new family united by His one Spirit in the bond of peace. We proclaim that our allegiance to the name of Christ is higher and stronger than any other loyalty.**

**SLIDE 15. Leader: Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one Body.**

**SLIDE 16. Congregation: Christ, let your word dwell in us richly, that we might teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. Grant us courage to make peace among ourselves, remembering that You ask us to leave even our acts of worship, so that we might be reconciled to each other.**

**SLIDE 17. Leader: Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God.**

**SLIDE 18. Congregation: Lord God, fill us with the love that flows from Your heart, that we might be agents of reconciliation in a broken world, ambassadors of the Prince of Peace in all our ways.**

**SLIDE 19. Congregation: Give us the patience to wait on Your judgments, rather than taking vengeance ourselves. Give us strength to yield, returning evil with good, and trusting in the power of Your love, rather than our own love of power.**

**SLIDE 20. Leader: Jesus warned that in the last days there would be wars and rumours of wars.**

**SLIDE 21. Congregation: Lord, strengthen Your children to be a sign to the world that one day You will bring an end to all war. Nations will beat their swords into plowshares; weapons of war shall become tools for peace, and the Tree of Life shall be given for the healing of the nations.**

**SLIDE 22. Congregation: But while we wait for that Day, free our hearts – and our mouths – to bless and pray for those who persecute us. Help us to live as people of peace and deliver us from the time of testing.**

Let me finish with a story that acts like a kind of quiz – and is certainly for you to talk about later if you'd like. Chuck Swindoll shares it as it was sent to him...

"I am 83 years old. I was in the MacDonalds drive thru this morning. The young lady behind me leaned on her horn and started mouthing some ugly things because I was taking too long to place my order.

So, when I got to the first window, I paid for her order along with my own. The cashier must have told her what I had done because as we moved up, she leaned out her window and waved to me. She began mouthing, "Thank you, thank you," probably feeling embarrassed that I had repaid her rudeness with kindness.

When I got to the second window, I showed the server both receipts - and I took her food too. Now she has to go back to the end of the queue and start all over again. Don't blow your horn at old people. We've been around for a long time!"

*So, peacemaker or punisher? I'll leave it to you to decide.*