

“Following the Call” by Charles E. Moore

II. Kingdom Commands – Nonresistance

Ch. 21

Last week we discussed **Matthew 5:33-37** – Jesus said: “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord’ But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your heads, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’, and your ‘No’, ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”

We discussed that “swearing”, the Greek word “Omnyo”, in this context meant swearing an oath. Why does Jesus not want us to swear an oath to God? How does this differ from the mentality of that day and the relationship between the people and God?

Matthew 5:38 – Jesus said: “You have heard that it was said, “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.” But I tell you, do not resist an evil person.” What do you think Jesus is telling us here?

Giovanni Papini (1881-1956) was an Italian journalist, essayist, novelist, short story writer, poet, literary critic, and philosopher. A controversial literary figure of the early and mid-twentieth century, he was the earliest and most enthusiastic representative and promoter of Italian pragmatism.

“Every person has an obscure respect for courage in others, especially if it is moral courage, the rarest and most difficult sort of bravery.” Why is “moral courage” so rare and so difficult? Why is it respected?

“Man is a fighting animal; but with no resistance offered, the peasure disappears; there is no zest left. There is no longer an adversary, but a superior who says quietly, “Is that not enough? Here is the other cheek;...”

What is Papini saying here? What does offering the other cheek do to our adversary?

“It is a bitter and repellent command; but Jesus never said it would be easy to follow him. He never said it would be possible to obey him without harsh renunciations,” What are “renunciations”?

“without stern and continuous inner battles;” What are these “inner battles”?

“without the denial of the old Adam and the birth of the new man.” Who is the “old Adam”? Who is the “new man”?

“But whether it pleases us or not, only by accepting this command of Christ can we solve the problem of violence. It is the only course which does not add evil to evil, which does not multiply evil a hundredfold, which prevents the infection of the wound, which cuts out the malignant growth when it is only a tiny pustule.” What is Papini saying here about evil and our actions?

Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881) was a Russian philosopher, novelist, short story writer, essayist and journalist. He is regarded as one of the greatest novelists in both Russian and world literature, and many of his works are considered highly influential masterpieces exploring complex philosophical and religious themes like free will, faith, suffering, and morality in 19th-century Russia, with major works including Crime and Punishment, The Idiot, Demons, and The Brothers Karamazov.

Gen Z is drawn to Dostoyevsky for his deep dives into relatable, modern struggles like anxiety, alienation, and the search for meaning, offering a “real” antidote to curated online life, while also finding his complex psychology and philosophical depth a refreshing challenge and a way to rebel against instant gratification through slow, meaningful reading.

“At some thoughts one stands perplexed, especially at the sight of men’s sin, and wonders whether one should use force or humble love. Always decide to use humble love. If you resolve on that, once and for all, you may subdue the whole world. Loving humility is marvelously strong, the strongest of all things, and there is nothing else like it.” What is Dostoyevsky saying? Why is this so?

I Corinthians 13:13 – Paul wrote: “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Why is love the greatest of these? What does this tell us about God?

Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878 - 1969) was an American pastor. Fosdick became a central figure in the fundamentalist–modernist controversy within American Protestantism in the 1920s and 1930s and was one of the most prominent liberal ministers of the early 20th century.

“He (Jesus) stirred some people to loyalty so intense that they willingly died for him and others to hatred so fierce that they would not rest until they killed him. ...they never thought of him in terms of infinite sweetness, vague poetry, universal charm.”

What gave the apostles and others the will and strength to live their lives for and in some cases die for Jesus?

What made the enemies of Jesus to be filled with hatred and rage so much that they wanted to kill Jesus?

Why did they not see the good and love in Jesus? Why do some people not see who Jesus is today?

Howard Thurman (1899 - 1981) was an African American pastor, philosopher, and civil rights leader. As a prominent religious figure, he played a leading role in many social justice movements and organizations of the twentieth century.

“No one ever wins a fight.” ...my grandmother repeated the words. Many years have come and gone since that afternoon in early summer. I have seen many fights, big and little. I have lived through two world wars. Honor is often a strange mixture of many things – pride, fear, hate, shame, courage, truth, cowardice – many things. People want to survive, yes, but on their own terms. And this is most often what is meant by honor.”

What are some reasons people, groups, and nations fight? Are these legitimate reasons?

“Not to fight at all is to choose a weapon by which one fights.” Have you ever thought of “not to fight” as a weapon?

“Of all weapons, love is the most deadly and devastating, and few there be who dare trust their fate in its hands.”

How strong does your faith have to be to choose not to fight?

Go and use love.