

A Workable Peace

“That’s a beautiful theory—beautiful! But it won’t work.”

They were discussing nonresistance, the idea that the way of peace is always the wise choice. One man had the idea that nonresistance will not win the opponent’s respect but rather lose it instead. Nonresistance will not get you what you want. It will not always win friends and influence people. It will not work.

It is true that force—the opposite of nonresistance— can be very effective. “Some people don’t understand nice,” and so the government needs to tell them in a way they understand. *“If thou do that which is evil, be afraid”* (Romans 13:4). But there is another side to this for a child of God.

Since Jesus was the one who told His own disciples to turn the other cheek and go the second mile, it is only fair to ask, “How did it work for Him?”

Depending on your viewpoint, it didn’t. At least it didn’t keep Him out of trouble. Enemies conspired against Him, and when the governor did not want to put Him to death, the multitude shouted, “Crucify him!” When Roman soldiers nailed Him to a cross and Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” what did that win Him? Certainly nothing in terms of saving His life. He stayed on that cross until He died.

His disciples—did they fare any better? They too were men of peace. We read nothing of their picking up weapons to get their point across. Peter in particular had once tried it, but he remembered Jesus rebuking him with the words, *“All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword”* (Matthew 26:52). Peter himself taught the importance of *“not rendering evil for evil”* (1 Peter 3:9). Peter died a martyr’s death, as well as most of the other twelve apostles.

Through the centuries, true followers of Jesus have certainly not crucified others, nor burned them at the stake, nor drowned or tortured them. Instead, they suffered these things. Onlookers might easily have said, “It won’t work.” What did they get out of not striking back?

They got what Jesus promised: *“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”* (Matthew 5:9).

And again, *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust”* (Matthew 5:44-45).

However important our money, reputation, health, and even our lives may be, they pale in contrast to this one reward: to be the children of God. *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed*

upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). This becomes of absolute importance at the close of life, when God is calling His children, name by name, to come home to be with Him.

Of course, the peaceable course has its rewards here and now. *"And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?"* (1 Peter 3:13). The Christian who courteously informs his neighbor, "Your dog killed twelve of our ducks" but does not ask for pay may or may not get money, but he will probably have a respectful neighbor. The Christian who accepts paying a fine without trying to make a fool out of the officer will probably win his respect. The Christian who gives food to the enemy soldier who requests it will probably not be shot!

But the Christian keeps his sight above these things. He is looking for eternal gain. "Ye... took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Hebrews 10:34).

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (Revelation 21:7)

Does it work? Will it work? Absolutely.

~David L. Martin