

Lesson 13: Open Forum – Part 2

I. First, thanks for the kind words about the lessons in this series. When I suggested this study as a potential class I thought it would be both interesting and helpful, but I never dreamed of the reception that it has received. Your kind comments have been most appreciated, especially in light of the work that has gone into each lesson. Some, of course, require more than others, but each of them has necessitated many hours of preparation. Eric and I realize the number of hours represented by the class members, and we never want to come in to teach a class for which we have not made adequate preparation. In fact, as you have noticed, our preparation exceeds the time that we have for each session (I am a worse offender than Eric in that regard and I refer to the extra time and not to the extent of preparation). Some, I understand, do not care for an all lecture class, but given that preparation takes so much time, and given that the time for presentation is so precious, and given that so many comments in an “open” class (for lack of a better expression) have a great tendency to get the class off course from the subject at hand with much point and counterpoint, lecture seems to be the best procedure. My preference would be to take all of the time necessary to cover a book of the Bible verse by verse. I took over a year to teach the book of Job in that manner, but given the time I asked and received questions in the class, always trying to keep the class on subject by directing the discussion. Absent that discussion generally results in more discussion than learning (at least a learning possibility). For that reason we are even more grateful than we can say for the fine reception that this class has received and we look forward to the next quarter. But to the remaining questions.

QUESTIONS

II. I have a question based on something said in the lesson on the role of women. The comment was made that Eric "preaches" through thywordistruth.com and probably reaches more people than most preachers do through their pulpit. If this is true, can a woman run a website similar to "Thy Word Is Truth" that is intended for a general audience? For that matter, can a woman write a book on religious issues for a general audience? Are Christian women restricted to writing for women?

A. First, the setting in which the woman is forbidden must be remembered.

1. 1 Timothy 2:11-12 establishes that the woman is not to preach or lead in the worship assembly of the church in the presence of men.
2. Some suggest that this is not an absolute prohibition, but one that can be waived in a man or group of men grant permission to the woman to preach or take the lead, assuming that in that instance the woman has not usurped authority over the man.

3. Clearly, however, man cannot give woman permission to do that which God has prohibited her doing.
4. The word “teach” means “didactic discourse” and one cannot preach or teach without delivering a didactic (intended to teach; morally instructive) discourse.
5. However, the word for “silent” in 1 Timothy ((be quiet or peaceful and submissive) is not that used in 1 Cor. 14 (be silent, hold your peace). 1 Timothy refers to a broader context in which the woman is to be characterized by a quiet, peaceful submission. It does not require that she refrain from speaking. 1 Cor. 14 refers to the worship assembly and requires silence in leadership.

B. Second, recall that a woman is not prohibited from all teaching.

1. Priscilla joined with her husband, Aquilla, in teaching Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly (Acts 18:26).

2. Lenski writes of Luke’s language describing this situation: “Aquila and Priscilla must have been surprised when they heard him. But they at once noted serious limitations. When Luke writes that they ‘took him to them’ (indirect middle voice), we must note all that is involved. Moreover, Luke now places Priscilla’s name before her husband’s. [The KJV reverses the names, but see the ASV and most other translation.] In v. 18 the reason for this placement is only grammatical; here it means much more just as it does twice in Paul’s letters (Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19, where Paul even uses Prisca instead of the diminutive Priscilla). We conclude that Priscilla was the moving spirit, that she was by nature more gifted and able than her husband, also spiritually fully developed due to having had Paul in her home for eighteen months while residing in Corinth. Aquila seems to have been a gentle, quiet soul, who was genuine in this unobtrusive way. It seems that the couple was childless.”

“The beauty of Priscilla’s character lies in the fact that she never thrust herself forward, never asserted herself, or made her superiority felt. She was loyally true to Paul’s teaching that the husband is the head of the wife. Aquila had found a pearl among women. Priscilla is the direct opposite of Sapphira (Acts 5). The one stimulated her husband to all that was good, the other helped her husband on to his destruction. Priscilla is the example our women need so much today when so many thrust themselves beyond their proper sphere and often do not know where to stop.”

3. Additionally, the woman may teach other women (Titus 2:3-4), and she may teach mixed groups such as Bible classes where she neither teaches a man or lord’s it over a man.

C. The question now is into which of these categories, if either, does teaching over the internet or writing a book fall?

1. It is clearly not the church assembled.
2. It is clearly not what we call “a worship service,” whether large or small.
3. Because it does not fall into any of the prohibited categories there is no scriptural prohibition to prevent a Christian woman from writing books or teaching on the internet for general consumption.
4. Moreover, the man who thinks that he has nothing to learn from a Godly woman or wife is robbing himself of a rich source of education.

III. Can a woman baptize?

A. Baptizing a person is the result of teaching; it is not teaching. Neither is it a learning situation calling for quiet submissiveness. In the worship service it would be a leadership role and should be done by a man, but all baptisms are not in a worship service.

1. If a woman’s baptizing a candidate violates any scriptural injunction, it would be that the female is not to exercise a leading role in the worship.
2. Even if it were otherwise all right, it is best to keep in mind that some things that are lawful are not expedient. 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23.
3. Obviously if there is no man present a woman not only can but should.
4. Personally, I have never seen a situation where such was necessary, but I can envision its happening.
 - a) While living in Lubbock, my wife taught a class for women at the jail; many of the students were baptized.
 - b) Had I or others not been available she absolutely should have performed the baptism.
5. The New Testament does not prescribe qualifications for who does the baptizing as it does for the one being baptized.
 - a) Questions concerning who can baptize are not new in the church.
 - b) Tertullian (ca. 155-230) wrote: “It is not permitted to a woman to speak in the church; but neither (is it permitted her) to teach, nor

to baptize, nor to offer, nor to claim to herself a post in any manly function, not to say (in any) sacerdotal office.”

c) Since Tertullian, similar problems have arisen again and again.

(1) Sometimes they are important enough, or are aggravated to such extents, to threaten the peace of the church.

(2) What is needed in these cases, as always, is a patient seeking for truth along the lines of the principles that are clearly revealed.

B. Where we need to be careful is in looking for some hypothetical situation with which we are “comfortable” and then applying it to a situation where “comfort” is not the standard.

1. This has been done with the introduction of musical instruments into young people’s gatherings, which, when the comfort is complete, is followed by introducing it into the worship service.
2. First Colony has recently taken that step.
3. Some argue against the necessity of baptism based on the hypothetical of a person’s being killed on the way to the baptistery, concluding that if he is excused we are all excused.
 - a) They never stop to ask by what authority he or they are excused.
 - b) They never stop to ask if they really want to be excused on that basis, i.e., an untimely death.
4. Some want to be saved like the thief on the cross, they assume without baptism (but see the lesson from last week), but when you start preparing the cross they change their minds.
 - a) When they say that that is not what they meant, that they just wanted to avoid baptism for the remission of sins, they admit that the hypothetical doesn’t apply to them.
 - b) That leaves them in knowing intentional rebellion against the will and commands of God.
 - c) They cannot be saved at the hour of untimely death by crying out, “But Lord, I was going to be baptized next Sunday.”

IV. How does “free will” balance with prayer for one’s salvation?

A. This question has perturbed Christians over the years.

1. Man is a free moral agent created by God with the ability to choose between Him and evil.

a) Joshua stated it well – “¹⁵ And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.” Joshua 24:15.

b) Joshua was but echoing what he had learned from Moses: “¹⁴ But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. ¹⁵ See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; ¹⁶ in that I command thee this day to love Jehovah thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, that thou mayest live and multiply, and that Jehovah thy God may bless thee in the land whither thou goest in to possess it. ¹⁷ But if thy heart turn away, and thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; ¹⁸ I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish; ye shall not prolong your days in the land, whither thou passest over the Jordan to go in to possess it. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life, that thou mayest live, thou and thy seed; ²⁰ to love Jehovah thy God, to obey his voice, and to cleave unto him; for he is thy life, and the length of thy days; that thou mayest dwell in the land which Jehovah sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.” Deuteronomy 30:14-20.

2. Given that man is a free moral agent who may reject God (though at man’s peril) and God will not override that choice, is it appropriate to pray that a man may be saved who has chosen to reject the way of God; is this not a prayer for God to do that which he has said that he will not do?

B. Two passages have been used in discussing this question.

1. 1 John 5:16-17: “¹⁶ If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and *God* will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.”

a) Of this passage *The Expositor’s Greek New Testament* says: “After the grand assurance that prayer is always heard, never

unanswered, the Apostle specifies one kind of prayer, *viz.* Intercession, in the particular case of a “brother,” *i.e.*, a fellow-believer, who has sinned. Prayer will avail for his restoration, with one reservation – that his sin be ‘not unto death’. The reference is to those who had been led astray by the heresy, moral and intellectual, which had invaded the churches of Asia Minor They had closed their ears to the voice of Conscience and their eyes to the light of the Truth, and they were exposed to the operation of that law of Degeneration which obtains in the physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual domains. *E.g.*, a bodily faculty, if neglected, atrophies. . . . So in the moral domain disregard of truth destroys veracity. Acts make habits, habits character. So also in the intellectual domain. *Cf.* Darwin to Sir J. D. Hooker, June 17, 1868: ‘I am glad you were at the *Messiah*, it is the one thing that I should like to hear again, but I daresay I should find my soul too dried up to appreciate it as in old days; and then I should feel very flat, for it is a horrid bore to feel as I constantly do, that I am a withered leaf for every subject except Science’. And so in the spiritual domain. There are two ways of killing the soul: (1) The numbing and hardening practice of disregarding spiritual appeals and stifling spiritual impulses. . . . (2) A decisive apostasy, a deliberate rejection. This was the case of those heretics. They had abjured Christ and followed Antichrist. This is what Jesus calls [blasphemy against the Holy Spirit] (Matt. xii. 31-32 = Mark iii. 28-30). It inflicts a mortal wound on the man’s spiritual nature. He can never be forgiven because he can never repent. He is ‘in the grip of an eternal sin. . . .*Cf.* Heb. vi. 4-6. This is ‘sin unto death’. Observe how tenderly St. John speaks: There is a fearful possibility of a man putting himself beyond the hope of restoration; but we can never tell when he has crossed the boundary. If we were sure that it was a case of ‘sin unto death,’ then we should forbear praying; but since we can never be sure, we should always keep on praying. So long as a man is capable of repentance, he has not sinned unto death.”

(1) Some, such as brother Guy Woods, state that this passage prohibits one who has committed a sin that is unto death. TEGNT, quoted above, may take the same position, but avoids the conclusion on the basis that it is beyond our ability to know when one has sinned to that extent and that therefore we should keep praying for one that may have reached that state.

(2) However, it seems to me that this position goes beyond what John is saying; he does not say that we should not pray for such a one, he says that he does not say that we should.

(3) He requires us to pray for the one that has not sinned unto death; he does not say that we should pray for the one who has.

(4) There is a difference between “should not” and “may not”.

(5) This seems to say that, while there is no obligation to pray for such, there is no prohibition against it.

b) Romans 10:1-3: “Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.”

(1) In this passage Paul is engaged in prayer (supplication) to God for Israel that they might be saved.

(2) While it is true that they had a zeal for God, it is also true that they had rejected the Messiah to the point of crucifixion.

(3) If ever a person or group of people were beyond “reachability” by God’s grace, it would seem to be the Sadducees and Pharisees of Paul’s day.

(4) Still, Paul had hope because he himself had been a Pharisee, a Hebrew of Hebrews. Phil. 3:5.

(5) Paul prayed for the apparently unreachable.

C. But what good does it do to pray for them when God cannot answer that prayer without violating their free will?

1. First, it is hard to sincerely and honestly pray for someone without personally reaching out to them.

2. Second, God may use providential means beyond our knowledge to bring them into a position where they will have opportunity and motive to obey the gospel if they choose to do so.

3. Third, God has already used one means – the Great Commission – to carry the gospel to them.

D. Finally, I leave you with one other passage: “And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Luke 23:34.

V. What is the Christian view of war? [This is an issue on which an entire quarter could be spent. Entire books have been written about it. The answer given here is a quick summary and a partial answer. While directed toward war, the principles also apply to peace officers.]

A. There are at least three basic attitudes toward war.

1. Pacifist – it is wrong ever to take human life whatever the reason or provocation; therefore, war is always wrong.

a) This was the position of many early Restoration Movement preachers.

b) Moses Laird wrote: “To illustrate what I mean: it is held to be doubtful whether a Christian man can go to war according to the New Testament. For myself I am candid to think he can not. But others, let me allow, with equal candor, think differently. Suppose now, we as a people, were equally divided on the point. Neither party could certainly force the other to accept its view. The difference should be held as a difference of opinion, and hence should be made a matter of forbearance. But should either party attempt to compel the other to accept its view, and in case of failure should separate, I should not hesitate to regard the separating party as a faction, and hence as condemned by the New Testament.”

c) David Lipscomb carried the position to the point that he thought it was wrong for a Christian to participate in civil government in any respect, even to vote.

d) Batsell Barrett Baxter stated in class that he would not kill a man who entered his house and was attacking and killing his wife.

2. Activist – as expressed by Commodore Stephen Decatur, Jr (5 January 1779 – 22 March 1820), an American naval officer notable for his heroism in the Barbary Wars and in the War of 1812. He was the youngest man to reach the rank of captain in the history of the U.S. Navy, and the first American celebrated as a national military hero who had not played a role in the American Revolution. “In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but right or wrong, our country!” Thus war is always right.

3. Selectivist – War is sometimes both just and justly fought.

B. Some basic principles.

1. The Christian is not to take personal vengeance. Rom. 12:19-21.
2. God's vengeance is not limited to the after-life. Rom. 13:1-7.
3. The question is not "What would Jesus do," but "What would Jesus have us do?"

C. What would Jesus have us do?

1. Soldiers are mentioned in the New Testament in the context of duties; none is commanded to go AWOL or cease serving when his enlistment is up.

a) Luke 3:14 ⁴ And soldiers also asked him [John the Baptizer], saying, And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse *any one* wrongfully; and be content with your wages.

b) Acts 10:1-2 ¹Now *there was* a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, ² a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. [Note that Scripture does not add "but he was a soldier" as it added "but he was a leper" in the case of Naaman (2 Kings 5:1).]

2. If we love our enemies, how can a Christian shoot them?

a) When an enemy has surrendered he can't; when an enemy is defenseless he can't.

(1) In fact one can probably envision many instances in which it would be inappropriate to kill an enemy while functioning as a soldier.

(2) In fact, this has often been the difference between countries that follow ethical warfare and those that do not.

(3) For instance, after the carnage in Spain, Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed told Lisbon's *Publica* magazine that a group of Islamists were "ready to launch a big operation" on British soil. "We don't make a distinction between civilians and non-civilians, innocents and non-innocents, only between Muslims and unbelievers. And the life of an unbeliever has no value." The cleric added that he expected to see the banner of Islam flying in Downing Street. "I believe one day that is going to happen. Because

this is my country, I like living here. If they believe in democracy, who are they afraid of? Let Omar Bakri benefit from democracy.”

(4) Right now the enemies of the United States are being provided special food consistent with their religious beliefs, adequate shelter, and medical treatment superior to that which they would receive in their own countries.

(5) This sounds a great deal like returning good for evil. Rom. 12:21; 1 Thess. 5:15.

b) Some questions may help clarify this question.

(1) Did God cease loving mankind when He destroyed all but eight souls in the flood?

(2) Does the fact that many will spend eternity in Hell mean that God does not love every human being even to the point of sending his Son to die for them?

(3) If God can love his enemies and still punish them, why can't we?

c) We are commanded to love our enemies, but we are also commanded to love the innocent citizens who many be enslaved or murdered by an attacking army?

(1) Is our obligation to them not to provide justice, to defend their God-given rights?

(2) Doesn't it make sense that our duty to protect the innocent must prevail?

d) A just war may be conducted both in the name of justice and of love; refusing to restrain an evildoer, or when necessary to take his life, when justice and love demand it, is a distortion of New Testament Christianity.

3. God has made clear that He desires to restrain evil among His creatures.

a) He has authorized the use of deadly force when necessary, which is one of the primary functions of earthly government. Rom. 13:1-7.

b) Those who righteously attend to such matters are even called ministers for good.

c) You may argue that this refers just to government and not to Christians, but is that realistic?

(1) Can a Christian under the right circumstances be such a “minister for good?”

(2) Recently the nation was outraged by a thief who stole from an elderly lady on a walker her livelihood, striking her in the face and knocking her down.

(3) Would a Christian observing this not have an obligation to help using whatever force was necessary, or should he hurry to the other side of the road while yelling, “Some of you folks who are lost anyway hurry up and help. I am a Christian and I am forbidden to lend assistance.

4. But isn't that returning evil for evil?

a) It is never evil to do that which is right.

b) 1 John 3:7 – *My* little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous:

c) Proverbs 13:24 – He that spareth his rod hateth his son; But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

d) Revelation 3:19 – ¹⁹ As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

e) When civil servants and soldiers put their lives on the line to serve their fellow citizens and protect them from evil, they are involved in self-sacrificing love which is the highest form of love. John 15:13.

5. Shouldn't we turn the other cheek? Matt. 5:39?

a) Jesus' language here is addressed to personal ethics and not invoking the *lex talionis* (Latin for "law of retaliation"), commonly referred to as “an eye for an eye.”

b) If this principle is one to be applied across-the-board to individuals and governments then Paul certainly got it wrong in Romans 13:1-7.

c) It is morally wrong not to prevent a murder if you can do so, and, failing to prevent it, it is morally wrong not to punish the evildoer.

d) Likewise, it is morally wrong for a God-ordained government not to defend its citizens against a foreign aggressor that would do them evil.

e) This being the case, the Christian should be willing to uphold the government's righteous hand as it does justice (cf. 1 Peter 2:14; Titus 3:1; Rom. 13:1-7).

D. Do we then conclude that every qualified Christian may serve in the military?

1. Yes, but not necessarily in the same capacity.
2. Not every Christian is qualified to serve as a police officer or a soldier, but those who are not so qualified should not belittle or condemn those who are and do.
3. Some who are otherwise qualified cannot serve in a context that would expose them to the possibility of having to take life because such would violate their conscience (Rom. 14:23), and that would be a sin within itself.
4. In the United States that belief is accommodated through conscientious objection; one who so objects can serve in other capacities such as the medical corp with the ability to treat all, enemies as well as fellow-countrymen.

E. Should a Christian then "kill for his government" any time that the government commands it?

1. Obviously not. A Christian in Iraq or in WWII Germany or Japan could not do so.
2. When the cause is just, however, and the means used are just, the Christian may be so engaged.
3. The Christian fights for justice just as God does who uses force to check evil and accomplish justice.

F. What problems would a Christian face in the military?

1. More important than the physical dangers are the moral perils that confront the military.
2. Gambling, drinking, whoremongering, and other vices are often overlooked if not directly or indirectly encouraged.
3. The Christian who enrolls in the military will have more opportunities to stray from the straight and narrow than his civilian cohort.

4. Moreover, the Christian will at times – sometimes long periods of time – be unable to assemble with the saints on the Lord’s Day.
5. It is not impossible to be in the military without compromising some convictions, but it certainly makes it more difficult.

G. Conclusion.

1. It is in the Christian that we find the best possibility of finding one who can do battle to the nth degree and be meek to the nth degree in a just war fought by just means and in a just manner.
2. We should honor and pray God’s richest blessings upon those chivalrous soldiers as they seek to faithfully fulfill both aspects of this “double demand,” best found in those who have, by God’s infinite grace, cultivated the wisdom of serpents and the harmlessness of doves. Matthew 10:16.