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War - A Christian Perspective (Part 2)



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg examines war from a Christian perspective and argues that war is inherently sinful for all parties involved. Aligning oneself with or against certain nations in conflict is problematic since Christians cannot determine God's intentions for a nation's involvement in a war. Christian pacifism is often misunderstood and unsupported by invalid arguments. Christians are encouraged to engage in spiritual warfare, put their faith in Jesus, and trust in God's protection rather than relying on military might. In general, the values of the kingdom of God should guide a Christian's perspective on war and conflict.

Transcript

We need to ask ourselves certain things in the day in which we live. We need to ask, as a prophetic conscience to our society, does the Christian have anything distinctive to say about war? If not, it's hard to know what good Christianity is, because there's hardly anything more relevant to moral behavior of human beings than war. For the simple reason that war is the sin that includes all other sins.

War itself is normally itself sinfully motivated, but even in the course of war, every kind of sin that can be identified is committed in the conduct of war. If Christians don't have something distinctive to say about that, different than what the world has to say, then maybe we're just so heavenly mighty, we're no earthly good, we don't have anything to say to our world. Maybe we don't have any way to be a conscience to our society about the real decisions they have to make about conduct.

But then we have to ask this other question. In a case where there is war, how do we know what God's intentions are for any individual conflict? If America was attacked by a hostile power, the theology of war we gain from the Bible is that God uses war to punish nations. Is God using that war to punish us, or not? How would we know? Now normally we'd say, well God wouldn't use communists or terrorists or some other really wicked people to punish us, even though we may not be a really great nation, we're better than they are.

We got more Christians than they got. But you know what, that's exactly what Habakkuk complained about. God told Habakkuk the prophet that God was going to use Babylon to punish Jerusalem.

And Habakkuk said, how can you punish Jerusalem using the instrumentality of a nation that's more wicked than we are? And God's answer was, oh don't worry about that, I'll get to them later. Jerusalem and Babylon are both wicked and they're both going to be judged one thing at a time. And they're both going to be judged.

But the point is, it would be incorrect at a time like that to assume in a war, here's Jerusalem, though they're fairly apostate, there's still a lot of God's people are there. Babylonians, none of them are God's people and here they come as a nasty pagan power against Jerusalem. Certainly conventional thinking, the way Christians now think, would be, well certainly God's on the side of Jerusalem, certainly the Jews should fight.

But you know another prophet at the time of that same war, Jeremiah, was told to prophesy to his people, surrender to the Babylonians. Anyone who goes out and surrenders to them will have his life as a prize. But if you resist and if you fight, you're going to be wiped out.

That's what Jeremiah had told them. Now these saints surrendered to the enemy, no wonder they threw him in jail. They put him in prison for that message.

But it was God's message. The question is, what if we were under attack from some really offensive, hostile, evil power? What if someone said, maybe this is one of those situations where God's judging us. And it's not that he wants us to fight, he wants us to acquiesce to the judgment of God.

We don't know, do we? I mean, in a given case, we don't have a prophet informing our president. How would we know God's intentions? If, in fact, God is seeking to judge our nation and we're fighting on the side of our nation, are we not then fighting against God? We're not just fighting against bad guys, we're fighting against God and resisting his intentions. Of course, that depends.

Some might say, well, it's your obligation in any case to defend your country and if God wants to wipe you out, you'll get wiped out anyway. But I really feel like Christians, before they take up arms and start doing things to other people that, as Christians, they normally wouldn't think are right to do at a time that's not war, they need to say, well, how do we know if this is what God wants us to do? How do we know that God's not on the other side in this particular conflict? Everyone thinks God's on their side. There were Christians in Hitler's Germany that believed that God was on Germany's side.

We had two nations, both of them thought God was on their side. Someone was wrong. So, we have to really think those things through more than we typically do.

One thing Christians have to really deal with right now is if involuntary conscription was reinstated in this country, should a Christian allow himself to be drafted? Christians need to have an ethic because it's not a problem that you're going to avoid if you've got children. They may get drafted. If you are at draft age, that's something you're going to be concerned with too.

You have to have some kind of a position based on your Christian convictions as to whether you would be drafted or not. Is the best thing a Christian can do for his nation is join the army and shoot bad guys or is there a distinctive warfare that Christians can do that no one else can do and which is in fact the warfare we're called to do instead? This was the view of the early Christians. I'll say more about that a little later.

Before we get into the actual scriptural case for what I believe is a Christian perspective, I want to say this. There are invalid arguments for Christians being involved in the military that are commonly used and there are also what I consider to be invalid arguments for Christian pacifism. Now, that doesn't mean that both views are wrong, but both views can be defended wrongly and most of the arguments you hear are invalid.

So, I just want to tell you what those are, I think. The arguments I hear the most that say a Christian should fight in the military are the following and these are what I consider invalid arguments. Then I'll tell you some invalid arguments for non-resistance too.

One of the invalid arguments for Christian involvement in the military is that Israel's wars provide a precedent for God's approval of Christian military involvement and that even the New Testament in Hebrews chapter 11 talks about the hall of faith that a lot of them were military guys. They're commended for their faith. So, you've got God approving of very godly men, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, fighting in wars and even the New Testament commends some of these people for their faith.

That's an irrelevant argument. An example of someone giving it is John Jefferson Davis in his book *Evangelical Ethics* and he says, The contention that Christians, in light of the passages on non-resistance, are barred from the office of a magistrate and consequently do not face such obligations for the armed defense of third parties is not really tenable according to Hebrews 11, 32-34. In this text, the judges of old are held up to the New Testament church as positive examples of faith.

By this faith, these saints conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, became mighty in war, and put foreign armies to flight. How could anyone really think that that's a true argument about Christianity? It's about people who lived under the old covenant at a time where things were very different than they are now in the very things that affect whether someone should go to war. All of the men that are referred to in the Old Testament as heroes for fighting war lived at a time when Israel, which was a political nation, was the kingdom of God.

God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and said, If you will obey my voice, keep my covenant, you will be my kingdom. That was God's plan. They were to be unlike all other nations in that they had no king but God.

Everything they did politically was as agents of God's kingdom. God's kingdom at that time was associated completely with a political and geographically defined and ethnically defined people. But that has not been the case since the New Testament has come.

The kingdom of God is not defined by ethnicity or it certainly isn't identified with any particular political government or nation. And so the issues of war which have to do with national identity and so forth are really affected by this change. And yeah, it's not surprising that the Christians could glorify the exploits of war of heroes in the Old Testament.

They were doing the right thing. There's no reason not to commend them for doing what God... they were heroic. They marched at the command of God.

They went into dangerous situations. Gideon is a remarkable case of courage and battle. No question about it.

But that's irrelevant to the question of now what are we supposed to do? They were supposed to do that then. But the things that made that right are things that have changed since then. There is no longer a political kingdom that is the kingdom of God on earth.

And there's no nation on earth that has a parallel status. So the wars of nations today are not anything like the wars of Israel in the Old Testament. Here's another argument.

According to the New Testament, the Christian must obey the government. This is based on Romans 13. You know, whoever resists the authority, resists the ordinance of God.

It is true. We are supposed to submit to authorities. Human governments are ordained by God to do something that God ordained them to do.

Namely, to punish evildoers and to praise those who do well. When the government is doing that, they're acting as the servants of God. And Paul, in Romans 13, talks about them as they are agents or they're ministers of God's wrath on those who are ungodly.

When a government is doing that thing that God ordained them to do, they're doing what God ordained them to do. We should support them and say, Yay, yay government, you're doing the right thing. But when they tell us to do something that God has told us not to do, they are usurping the position of God himself.

Jesus said, Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, but to God what is God's. It's wrong to

render to Caesar what really is God's. It's right to render to Caesar what is Caesar's.

But when you take what is God's and render it to Caesar, you've got an idol. Caesar's become an idol and he's taking over God's rights from God, which Caesar's like to do. But Christians are in the position to say, No, you're not going to do it under my sponsorship.

And that is why Christians were fed to the lions in large numbers, because they were told by Caesar to burn incense to Caesar. They wouldn't do it, because that was an act of worship. As idolaters say, they got thrown to the lions.

They'd rather die than obey Caesar in a case like that. And if it could be established on other grounds that Christians should not participate in war, now that has not yet been established in this room, in these lectures yet, but if it could be established that Christians should not fight in war, then Caesar's commands to the contrary should be irrelevant. If it is so, if it could be established that warfare is wrong for Christians, then no matter what Caesar says to the contrary, we must obey God rather than man.

So the statement, while Christians should fight in war because they should obey the government, is not taking into account the phenomenon of civil disobedience, which is commended in Scripture also. The midwives who defied Pharaoh's order to kill the Jewish babies, God blessed them because they defied Pharaoh's orders. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refusing to bow to the idol.

Daniel refusing to stop praying to God when the king gave a command that you can't pray to God for 30 days. The apostles standing before the Sanhedrin being told not to preach anymore in the name of Jesus, they say, well, whether it's right inside of God for us to obey you rather than God, you be the judge, but we're going to do what we're going to do, and we're going to preach the gospel because we can't stop, because we should obey God rather than man. Authorities have never had more authority than God.

Authorities have as much authority as God gives them, but not more. And so the argument really doesn't hold weight in itself. Another argument for Christians in the military is that even Jesus said and did things that sanctioned the use of violence.

Here are some examples. Jesus said he did not come to bring peace but a sword. In Matthew 10, verse 34, many Christian books have given this as a proof that Jesus was not against Christians fighting war because he said, I didn't come to bring peace but a sword.

But they're failing to recognize that sword there is a metaphor for division. And the parallel statement in Luke 12, verse 51, Jesus said, suppose ye that I have come to bring peace on the earth, nay, but rather division. He's not talking about a literal sword.

Did Jesus pick up a sword any time in his life and use it? Of course not. He didn't bring a

sword in that sense. The world already had that kind of sword.

But he did come to bring division between people who were Christians and non-Christians. And he goes on to say, between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, between fathers and sons. Is anyone saying that Jesus wants to take up swords and kill our fathers because he came to bring a sword between us? Obviously, he's talking about division and a sword is simply a metaphor.

He's not advocating use of a physical sword. Another thing Jesus said, he advised his disciples to buy swords. You probably are familiar with it.

It's in Luke chapter 22. He's in the upper room with them. He said, when I sent you out without purse and without money and so forth, did you lack anything? They said, no.

And he said, well, now I say to you, take your purse, take your sandals, take your money, and if anyone does not have a sword, let him sell his cloak and buy one. Let him sell his garment and buy a sword. And they said, well, Lord, here are two swords.

And he said, it is enough. People who want Christians to fight in war love that passage. He said, buy a sword.

And commentators, apparently not thinking very clearly when they write on it, almost always say, well, what Jesus was saying is, when he sent them out before, they didn't have to worry about hostility against him because his movement wasn't very unpopular yet. But now that he's going, he's going to be crucified. He's going to be viewed as a criminal.

Their movement's going to be viewed as a criminal. They're going to be attacked. They need to be ready to defend themselves and get swords.

What a ridiculous thing to think that's what Jesus is saying. Later the same night, Peter actually had a sword and took it out, and Jesus said, put away your sword. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword.

He wouldn't let them use it. And we never read in the book of Acts or in Christian history in the first three centuries that Christians ever felt that Jesus' words meant that when their persecutors come, they should grab their swords and start fighting. We never see any resistance to the persecutors with swords.

Apparently, the disciples didn't understand Jesus to mean that. But one could deduce that he didn't mean that, simply by reading the passage. He said, if any of you don't have a sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.

They said, Lord, here's two swords. He said, it is enough. How could that be enough? If he literally wants them each to buy a sword, and there's 11 of them present, and they

say, we got two swords.

He said, that's enough. Would he just contradict himself? I thought he just said, everyone needs one. There should be 11 swords.

If there's less, someone's got to sell their clothes and buy one because they need 11 swords. If anyone doesn't have one, they need to buy one. Well, here's two.

Well, that's enough. Well, that's not enough if all of them are supposed to have swords. That's not at all enough.

What's going on in that conversation? I will tell you, that is the most confusing interchange between Jesus and his disciples I've ever found in the Scripture. I honestly don't know exactly what he's saying. And a lot of different suggestions have been made.

But the one thing that doesn't make sense at all is to say, he was saying, it's time for you guys to arm yourselves, to defend yourselves forcibly against aggressors. It's crazy because, A, they never saw it that way. They never did it.

The one time one of them tried to do it later that same night, he was rebuked for it. And the conversation the way it proceeded doesn't allow that. Because if he literally meant, buy a sword, each of you, and there were only two among 11, and he said it was enough, then he must have meant something else.

What he meant is not entirely clear. I'll tell you my own opinion, but there's other opinions, and I'm not sure which is the right one for sure. But in those days, the Roman army did not arm their soldiers at government expense.

People who were soldiers had to buy their own equipment. And a soldier going to battle would certainly not go without a sword. If necessary, he'd sell his clothing to get a sword.

If he's going to battle, he's not going out there unprepared. And a sword is an essential thing for a soldier. Jesus is saying, just as a soldier would sell whatever he had to sell to get a sword because he's going to battle, so you need to make any sacrifice, you need to be prepared for what's facing you.

Using a metaphor of a soldier buying a sword. Now that might not be what he meant, he might have meant something else. But to make this statement, outweigh the statement he said very clearly later, put away your sword, those who live by the sword will die by the sword.

You've got those two statements in tension if they're both talking about literal swords. And one is, but this one doesn't seem to be in my opinion. Nonetheless, we hear this argument all the time.

This quote is coming from Lorraine Bettner in his book, *The Christian Attitude Toward*

War. He said, in the last discourse Jesus had with his disciples, we find some significant words in regard to the use of weapons. He said, but now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet, and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak and buy a sword.

Luke 22, 36. So important would it be that they have some means of self-defense, that if necessary they are to sell their coats to secure it. So obviously this is taking that position.

Another writer of the same mindset, Robert A. Morey in his book, *When Is It Right to Fight?* He said, Jesus told his disciples to buy weapons to arm themselves. While it is hardly consistent with the pacifist picture of Jesus, it does strengthen the inference that Jesus approved of the Old Testament principle of the use of weapons in self-defense. We cannot imagine a pacifist arming his disciples with weapons.

True, I can't imagine a pacifist arming his disciples with weapons. But for him to let them keep two swords among them when there's eleven of them isn't exactly arming them with weapons. And when they tried to use it in self-defense, he said, no, don't do that.

Sounds kind of pacifistic. Three authors who wrote a book called *Christians in the Military*, the early experience, they said, quote, the most violent statement which might legitimately be distilled from the Gospels is that Jesus permitted his disciples to carry swords in defense against highwaymen, unquote. So they're assuming that Jesus literally told them, buy swords and then when highwaymen attack you on the roads, kill them.

It's not at all clearly indicated that's what he means. Another thing that they sometimes say about Jesus is Jesus said there would be wars until the end of the world because he talked about there would be wars and rumors of wars and so forth. Now, actually, Jesus didn't say there would be wars till the end of the world.

It's only by, I think, the mistake in association with that discourse in Matthew 24 with the end of the world that people say that. What he actually said is there will be wars and rumors of wars, but the end is not yet. So it's not the end of the world.

But even if it was, so what? You'll hear of wars and rumors of wars. Is that an advocacy of fighting? To me, this is desperation. When you see those who are writing books to defend Christians in the military resorting to this kind of argument, you say, you know, the case must be kind of desperate.

Robert Maury in his book, *When Is It Right to Fight?* says, In the New Testament, Jesus clearly indicated that wars will continue to the end of history. Yeah, if he did, so what? Because while wars will cease when the Messiah comes and sets up his eternal kingdom, God has not told us to live in this wicked world as if we were already living in the eternal kingdom where the lion and the lamb shall lie down together. What will work one day in

the context of perfection and sinlessness will not work now in the context of sinfulness where the lion devours the lamb.

What works and what doesn't work isn't exactly the concern of the Christian. That's the concern of the pragmatist. A pragmatist decides what's right and wrong to do by whether it's going to work or not.

Well, when Jesus said, I send you out as sheep among wolves, how's that going to work? You send a sheep out among wolves, that's not going to work out real well. Well, it works out the way he wants it to work out. You don't decide what goals you want and then decide your ethics based on how do you reach those goals.

You decide your ethics by saying, did God say anything about what he wants us to do? Let's do that, not worry about how it turns out. Maybe it'll turn out the way God wants it to. Who knows? Maybe we'll die.

Maybe we'll be rescued supernaturally. You never really know. You can't just say the ethics of the kingdom don't work in a world where the lion still consumes the lamb.

Well, they don't work for what goals? Who's setting the goals here? If God says turn the other cheek, well, it seems like one of the things that might happen is you might get pummeled into a bloody pulp. And you might say, that didn't work very well. But apparently it worked just the way God wanted it to because he's the one who told you to do it.

And he's not stupid. I mean, it's not like modern thinkers have figured out something God hadn't figured out. You know, God may have read this book by Robert Moore.

He said, you know, I never thought of that. I never thought of that. If these guys turn the other cheek, they might get hurt.

It won't work. I don't think that that's the way Christians are supposed to do it. That's not distinctively Christian thinking.

That's pragmatic thinking. And it's wrong, in my opinion. Here's another argument.

Since capital punishment is sanctioned in the New Testament, so is war. A lot of Christians don't believe capital punishment is sanctioned in the New Testament. Now, I think it is.

But many pacifists don't think it is. And the early Christians didn't feel good about capital punishment either. But R.C. Sproul, in his book, *Ethics and the Christian*, said, The issue of a Christian's involvement in war is an extension of the more primary question of capital punishment.

In a certain sense, war is capital punishment on a grand scale. Now, that's an interesting

statement because, you know, the early Christian fathers actually said war is more like murder on a grand scale. He said it's like capital punishment on a grand scale.

Now, does anyone know the difference between murder and capital punishment? There's a significant difference between those two things. Anyone know what that is? Murder is unjust. Capital punishment is just.

Murder takes the life of an innocent party. Capital punishment takes the life of a guilty party. They're very different in character from each other.

Capital punishment is not just another species of murder. It's the remedy that the Bible gives for murder, frankly. But I'm not here to talk about or defend capital punishment per se.

War, in any case, is not like an extension of capital punishment. It's much more like an extension of murder. Unless, of course, it's a perfectly just war.

If a war conformed to all the just war guidelines, it could be more like capital punishment. Because the only people getting killed are the people who are trying to murder you. But there hasn't been a war like that yet.

It's not likely you're ever going to run into one. Our nation does not fight wars on the basis of just war theory. Therefore, there's nothing like capital punishment about it.

Innocent people get killed, too. In capital punishment, the way God wanted it, innocent people never die. Only guilty people.

Lorraine Bettner in her book, *The Christian Attitude to War*, said, The policeman and the soldier who defends his country, like the judge who protects the side, does not act with a malicious motive to avenge a personal wrong, but with an altruistic motive for public safety. He performs his duty not as an individual, but as an officer of the state. And in the scriptures, war among nations is given the same status as capital punishment among individuals.

That is not exactly true. It is kind of like capital punishment in the sense that God decided that whole society deserves to die. But I don't know of any society around today that God has told our country they deserve to be wiped out.

Men, women, and children. And that's the only kind of wars God really sanctioned. He never sanctioned this just war idea.

You either don't fight in war or you fight the kind of wars God commands you to fight. There's one other invalid argument about this. It's that Christian citizens owe it to their society to defend the freedom that they enjoy.

Everyone's heard this. Everyone's thought this, I'm sure. The early Christians heard it,

too.

Let me read the argument from Lorraine Bettner's book, *The Christian Attitude to War*. It says, Surely every person who has enjoyed or expects to enjoy the blessings and privileges of life in a particular country is under obligation to assist in the defense of that country. He also says, No one has the right to enjoy the blessings of religious and civil freedom unless he, together with all other free men, is willing to defend that freedom.

He means, of course, with military might. Arnobius, the 3rd century Christian apologist, actually said this in his book, *Against the Heathen*. As a result of Christians' nonviolence, an ungrateful world has now, for a long period of time, enjoyed the benefit from Christ.

For by His means, the rage of savage ferocity has been softened, and the world has begun to withhold hostile hands from the blood of fellow creatures. What he's saying is that the influence of Christianity has made the Roman Empire a more peaceful and just place. And it wasn't Christians fighting in wars to make it happen.

Their spiritual influence benefited the society, frankly, more than the Roman soldiers ever did in those areas. Origen, in the 3rd century, said this, Our answer is that we do, when occasion requires, give help to kings, but in a divine way, putting on the whole armor of God. We do this in obedience to the injunction of the apostle.

I urge, therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all men, for kings and for all those in authority. The more anyone excels in holiness, the more effective is his help to kings, even more than is given by soldiers who go out to fight and slay as many of the enemy as they can. To those enemies of our faith who would require us to bear arms for the empire and to slay men, we reply, Do not the priests who attend your gods keep their hands free from blood, so that they may offer the appointed sacrifices to your gods with hands unstained and free from human blood? Even when war is upon you, you never enlist the priests in the army.

If that, then, is a praiseworthy custom, how much more so that while others are engaged in battle, Christians too should engage as the priests and the ministers of God, keeping their hands pure by our prayers, by which we vanquish all demons who stir up war. In this way, we are much more helpful to the kings than those who go into the field to fight for them. And none fight better for the king than we do.

Indeed, we refuse to fight under him, although he may require it. But we do fight on his behalf, forming a special army, an army of righteousness, by offering our prayers to God." Now, see what's amazing is that when I was a teenager reading the Bible and forming my own views about war, in my own mind, I formulated that exact same argument. When someone said, well, how can you enjoy the freedoms that were won by war and you won't go out and fight the wars? You're not willing to defend the freedom.

I thought, well, if I understand the Bible correctly, if I live a godly life and I evangelize and I intercede and I pray, I'm conducting a warfare that's more helpful to the nation than shedding blood is helpful to the nation. I don't deny that God has used wars to procure freedoms and so forth for us, as well as he's used wars to slaughter a bunch of our young men and women, too. I assume the freedom is worth it, and the young men and women who died may have thought so, too.

It's kind of a trade-off. I'm not sure which I'd prefer. I do like my freedom, but I'd also like our sons and daughters to have been able to live out a natural lifetime as well.

I honestly don't know. All I can say is God procures freedom and he has used wars sometimes. Interestingly enough, Canada has a lot of freedoms, too, similar to ours, not quite as many, but they never had a revolutionary war and they weren't procured through war.

We can't just assume that war is the only way that God can give freedom to a nation. If it is, our warfare is of a different type. We provide security to a nation by elevating its moral standards so that God doesn't want to judge it.

Now, there are also inadequate or invalid arguments for pacifism. There are three that I hear that I think are mistaken. They're well-intentioned, but I think they're mistaken.

One is that the New Testament teaches universal non-resistance. I don't believe the New Testament teaches universal non-resistance. When Jesus said, do not resist the evil man, there were some particular situations that he was talking about.

If someone strikes you, you don't strike him back. If he sues you, you don't defend yourself, you give him what he wants. He doesn't say if he puts a knife to your child's throat, just stand by and do nothing.

Everything that Jesus gave as examples of the non-resistance he was promoting is when you are the one who stands to be hurt. If it's between your happiness, your right, your well-being and that of your enemy, choose your enemy's well-being. Love your enemies.

If it's between my child's safety and my enemy's safety, then we've got a different kind of situation. Now, maybe I should do the same thing. Maybe non-resistance is called for, but it doesn't say so.

That kind of situation is never addressed. The truth of the matter is the New Testament never addresses the subject of whether people should fight in war or not. Our ethic has to be deduced from relevant principles that are taught.

And the Bible, everywhere when it talks about non-resistance, envisages a situation where it's me being assailed. I'm the potential victim of an aggressor, and I should be willing to be a victim. Like one of the church fathers said, we should be more willing to

spill our own blood than spill another person's blood.

But when we are put in the position as protectors of helpless children, let us say, or in my opinion, of a husband or wife or whatever, or for that matter, even of other people's children. I mean, it doesn't have to be my own. If I'm walking down the street and I see a child being attacked by a criminal or a woman being raped, I feel like, as a Christian, I don't feel that just standing by and praying about it is all that God wants me to do.

I feel that there's intervention of a loving sort that is loving to the victim and can indeed be loving even to the perpetrator, even though they might not like it. Loving someone doesn't mean you do what they like. When you spank a child, it's not what they like.

But it's the loving thing to do if it's done properly in the right situation. And I therefore believe that non-resistance as a universal principle is not clearly taught in the New Testament. Sacrificing my life, sacrificing my rights for someone who may be hostile to me is taught in the Scripture.

Certainly, there's a form of resistance of evil that we put up, even if it's preaching to them, even if it's rebuking an evil man. Paul and Jesus and others rebuked evil men, and that's resisting their activity. It's not doing it with physical violence, but it's not just putting up with it.

It's resisting it. It's putting up a moral resistance. So, non-resistance as a vague general category is not the principle that characterizes New Testament teaching that governs all other choices.

What is taught is I must be willing to lay down my rights and my life, even if the person who's taking it is not a friend of mine. That does not necessarily extrapolate into a universal non-resistance ethic in all situations. The second argument is the New Testament teaches universal non-violence.

Well, I'm not sure it does. That's what we call violence. If you react violently to something, that doesn't mean you kill somebody.

It doesn't mean you hurt them. A violent motion is simply not a calm motion, not a calm measured motion. Violence is kind of, in some respects, erratic or not calm.

People often use Jesus cleansing the temple as a proof that Jesus was not non-violent and that we should therefore fight in wars. I do believe that Jesus cleansing the temple does prove that Jesus was not universally non-violent. Whipping animals with a whip is a fairly violent action.

It's not a bad action, but it's not a calm action. My impression is he was shouting, turning over tables. Those are violent actions, but they're not hurting anybody.

It's not comparable to going to war. And it's amazing to me how many times I've heard Christians say, well, how can you say you shouldn't go to war when Jesus himself drove the money changers out of the temple? I say, well, to me there is not a moral equivalence to striking cows with a whip and shooting fellow human beings. It's not exactly the same thing.

Both are acts of violence, but they're different degrees and different kinds of violence. Violence, we use it as a word that always speaks of like criminal violence. To the child that is being spanked, the parent's action is sensed as a violent act.

Not necessarily an unfair or an unloving act. And for that reason, I don't think we have an absolute non-violence ethic. I can't think of any verse in the New Testament that says, thou shalt not do any violence.

It does say, love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. But again, I'm not harming my children when I discipline them.

And some acts of resistance and even some forms of violent resistance, if they're non-lethal, can be not harming somebody. They may be resisting and physically or even violently stopping them from doing something that they really ought not to do, and which they might end up sorry that they did if I didn't stop them. It can be a loving thing in some cases.

Finally, I sometimes read in pacifist literature that the New Testament teaches the infinite value of human life. No, the Bible doesn't talk about the infinite value of human life. Certainly, man is made in the image of God and that makes him far more valuable than the animals.

But not infinitely valuable. If human life was infinitely valuable, then there'd never be a right reason to take it. Capital punishment, even in the Old Testament, would have been criminal because you're destroying an infinitely valuable life.

The Bible teaches that God alone is infinitely valuable. Everything he has created has value proportionate to what he imputes to it. Man is very valuable.

Human life is very valuable, but not infinitely valuable. It's not something that it's never right to violate it. To my mind, that's humanism.

Humanism would say man is infinitely valuable. Christianity says God is infinitely valuable. Man, the heart of the wicked, is little worth, the Bible says.

Man has value, but that doesn't mean I think it's wrong for a state official to kill a murderer. Of course, it raises questions, what if the state official is a Christian? Well, that's another issue. Should a Christian be in that role? That's a hard call.

The Kingdom of God is the teaching of the New Testament. It was the core of Jesus' teaching, it's the core of the Apostle's teaching. The Kingdom of God is at hand.

The Kingdom is upon you. The Kingdom has come. The Kingdom is among you.

The Kingdom has overtaken you. The Kingdom of God is like this. Now, what is the Kingdom of God? The Kingdom of God is that alternative order that Jesus established under himself as King.

He's the King. He's at the right hand of God. He's on the throne.

All authority in heaven and earth has been given to him. He's the King over everything. He's the King over the kings and the Lord over the lords.

And those who willingly acknowledge him as such and submit to his kingship are, in a special sense, subjects in this Kingdom. In another sense, the whole world is his Kingdom because really all the world is subject to him, but not all are willingly subject. In this present age, before Jesus comes back, there are only some who are willingly subject.

And they are the ones who, specially speaking, have the Kingdom identity. So that Paul says in Romans 14, 17, The Kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Well, only Christians have righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

So he's talking strictly about Christian experience there. The Jews, when they came out of Egypt, or back then they weren't called Jews, they were called Israel. God said, If you keep my covenant with my wife, you will be my kingdom.

Why? Because they'd be his subjects. They'd be willingly embracing his kingship. Now, Christians are that.

We're the ones who keep his covenant. We're the ones who obey his voice. And we're the ones who are, as it says in Revelation 5, 10, a kingdom of priests, as Israel once was.

God's Kingdom is comprised of people who willingly embrace Christ's kingship and Christ's lordship. That people on the earth are currently a minority on the earth and may always be. And they form an alternative society.

A counter-cultural community under another king, one Jesus. When the apostles taught in Thessalonica, the complaint that was brought against them by their adversaries before the courts was, These people are teaching us things that are contrary to Caesar. They're saying there's another king, one Jesus.

Well, that's exactly indeed what they were teaching. They weren't teaching contrary to Caesar, but they were saying there's another king, one Jesus. And when you become a Christian, you embrace another king, a lord.

Lord and king are interchangeable terms. And so, we're in the kingdom. And that kingdom isn't just an individual thing.

I love Jesus. I'm going to him when I die because he's my king. He's the king over all the people who love him.

And they are a society that have rules and that have standards among themselves that are not shared outside of that community. They're a community of people that have different standards dictated by their king. For the Christian, the first thing to realize is that our citizenship is in that kingdom now.

We've been born again into another kingdom and we're loyal to that kingdom. Paul says in Philippians 3.20, our citizenship is in heaven. Now, Christians ever since the Reformation, maybe before, have been fond of talking about dual citizenship of the Christian.

They'd say, I'm a citizen of America and I'm a citizen of the kingdom of God. Well, maybe, but the Bible doesn't say that. The Bible just says I'm a citizen of heaven.

It doesn't say I'm a citizen of America. With reference to America, it says, or for that matter, the whole world, I'm a stranger and a pilgrim, not a citizen. It says that in 1 Peter 2.11, Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

We are strangers, sojourners in this world and pilgrims. We have a task and we have a relationship with the government we live under. We're citizens of heaven, but we are ambassadors here.

America is my domicile nation where I am here to serve as an ambassador of the kingdom of God. My citizenship is under King Jesus. I live as a concession under the laws of my domicile nation, but there's limits.

There's limits to my loyalty to the domicile nation because it's not really where I'm a citizen. I'm an ambassador here from another nation. I'm an agent of a foreign government.

That's what I am. And that foreign government has its headquarters in heaven. And therefore, as a stranger, a pilgrim, an ambassador from heaven, from the kingdom of God, my role in society is definitely very different than that of people who aren't Christians.

Now, the kingdom of God is today not affiliated with any geographical region or political system. God said to Jesus in Psalm 2, Ask of me and I'll give you the heathen for your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the world for your possession. Christ's kingdom is not geographically limited to the nation of Israel or any other nation, certainly not

America or England or anywhere.

It's worldwide. And it's made up of the people who are subject to Christ. So in a sense, you and I, as well as every Christian in China or Russia or Iraq, whatever Christians may be there, we're all part of one kingdom.

We all have the same king and we're all just ambassadors on this planet to various domicile nations. So our loyalty is to our fellow citizens, just like a person whose identity as an American citizen is loyal to his fellow Americans. Christians are loyal to their fellow Christians.

We're translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of his own dear son, it says in Colossians 1.13. And we belong to another society. It's not associated with any one nation. It says in Luke 17.20 and 21, now when he was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he said, the kingdom of God doesn't come with observation, nor will they say, see here or see there.

Indeed, the kingdom of God is within you. The kingdom of God isn't over there or over there. You can't say there it is or there it is.

It's a spiritual kingdom defined by spiritual loyalties. It's international and interracial. In Luke 13.29, Jesus said, they will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and sit down in the kingdom of God.

That is, people, Gentiles from all nations will come and be part of the kingdom of God and are doing so even now. Furthermore, the kingdom of God and its citizens on earth are capable of surviving as a kingdom, as an alternative society, no matter what political system they're under. Sometimes thriving most under oppressive political systems, ironically.

But there's many things ironic about Christianity. In Daniel 2.44, it says, In the days of these kings, it's referring to the Roman Empire, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people. It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

The kingdom of God of which we are a part is going to stand forever. Ultimately, it's going to consume all the other kingdoms. It's a survivor.

It's not going to be crushed if we lose our democratic freedoms. We'll be very uncomfortable if we lose them, and I'll be very unhappy, briefly, but I'll accept it. I mean, why should I whine? How many Christians in history have had anything like this? No one felt they had the right to it.

We just think we have the right to it because we never know anything else. But the kingdom of God overcomes the kingdoms of this world. They don't overcome it even

when they persecute it.

Now, there's a distinctive warfare of that kingdom. Because it's a spiritually defined kingdom, the warfare is a spiritual sort of warfare. It's not against flesh and blood, and we don't fight with carnal weapons.

Jesus said in John 18:36 when he was asked if he was a king, He said, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight so that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from here.

Warfare to defend your nation seems sanctioned here. If it's a defensive war to defend your king, and if Jesus' kingdom was that kind, His servants would do that too. But it's not.

His kingdom is of a different sort, and their warfare is of a different sort. Ephesians 6:12 says, We do not wrestle against flesh and blood. We Christians, that is.

But we wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of witness in heavenly places. That's our warfare. In 2 Corinthians 10, verses 4 and 5, it says, For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, that means not physical, not fleshly, but are mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Now, a weapon that can bring a thought into captivity is not a physical weapon. Because stone walls and iron bars do not a prison make. Paul was imprisoned, but he said, But the gospel is not bound.

You can't control a man's thoughts by putting a sword to his throat, or a gun to his head, or even by cutting off his head. You just make his thoughts cease. You don't change them.

If you're going to bring thoughts into captivity, you need a different kind of weapons than that. And Paul said, We have weapons that are mighty through God to the bringing of every thought captive to obedience to Christ. These are spiritual weapons.

That's our battle. The warfare is spiritual. In Daniel 10, verse 13, An angel appeared to Daniel and said, The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days.

Behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the king of Persia. He's talking about demonic powers and the heavenlies fighting. This is the warfare of the kingdom.

Daniel was, through his prayers and fasting, I think, participating in this spiritual warfare

and getting this angel to be able to succeed against this demon, the prince of Persia. And so also, elsewhere in Scripture, we find that the Christians have a warfare they fight. Now, Jesus said, No man can serve two masters.

And you certainly can't fight in two armies at the same time. If you're fighting in God's army, or you're fighting against certain foes in a certain way, to be enlisted in another army where your foes are defined entirely differently, including some of your Christian brothers that are on the side that are supposed to be your enemies, you're going to have some serious conflicts of interest here. And the early Christians recognized that instantly.

Now, I just want to run through some important points that will be done. The values of the kingdom of God are faith, hope, and love. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, We now abide these three things.

Faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love. I want to talk about how faith, hope, and love impact the issue of how we participate or not in warfare.

We don't have the same reasons to participate in war that a worldly person does. A worldly person needs to save his life. We don't.

Jesus said, He that seeks to save his life will lose it. But he who loses his life for my sake, shall find it. We're on a different schedule, a different agenda than the world.

Their agenda is to stay alive. Ours is to stay faithful unto death. If we die young, it's made easier.

We don't have to be faithful quite as long, at least not in the context of conflict. We'll be faithful still after we die, but the only task I've ever understood myself to have in the past 35 years is not to stay alive. It's to stay holy, to stay faithful, and frankly, if someone comes in here and kills me, they've done a bad thing because I didn't deserve it, but they made my job easier.

I just managed to be faithful to death and I didn't have to do it another 30 years against the conflicts of the enemy anymore. I graduated. I won the war.

I overcame. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of the Testament. They did not love their lives unto the death.

We are very differently motivated than worldly people and those motivations have an impact on the whole issue of fighting a war. Our faith, faith, hope, and love. What does faith do for us? We put our faith not in military might, not even in long life and survival.

We put our faith in God and the fact that we are in God's hands and He will do what is best for us if we're only obedient. If we just obey Him, we can count on it, our fate will be

what He chooses. If we're disobedient, who knows? We may end up somewhere He didn't want to stand up.

But if we do just what He says to do, the outcome will be His outcome and it will be what He wants. And that's what trusting God is. In Psalm 118, verses 6 through 9, it says, The Lord is on my side, I will not fear.

What can man do to me? The Lord is for me among those who help me. Therefore, I shall see my desire on those who hate me. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.

It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. Now, in warfare, certainly the majority of people involved in war are putting their confidence in man. Now, there may be some Christian soldiers out there who say, well, you know, I'm putting my confidence in Jesus and that could be true.

But wars are not generally fought by people who are not trusting in man. They're trusting in arms, they're trusting in warfare, they're trusting in soldiery. And this says, it's better to put confidence in God.

This is what faith is. Jeremiah 17, 5 says, Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord. Psalm 20, verse 7 says, Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.

Chariots and horses are weapons. Some trust in those, but we instead trust in God. Now, some might say, well, wait a minute.

All these quotes are from David about trusting in God rather than military, but wasn't he a military man? Yes, he was. But he fought in obedience to God. My point is not that people who trust in God never fight.

Clearly, many of the people of faith in Hebrews 11 had faith and they fought. Having faith just means you do what God says and you don't worry about the consequences. You trust God with the outcome.

That's trusting God. That's faith. David was told to fight.

He fought. He even fought against huge giants and stuff like that, but he trusted in God. And he knew if he did what God wanted to do, it would turn out the way God wants it to turn out.

If God says, don't fight, but turn the other cheek, faith would say, okay, that's what I'll do. I'll trust God with the outcome. Depends on what the commands are.

Our faith tells us God is sovereign. He's sovereign over rulers. He's sovereign over

enemies.

Jesus said to Pilate, you could have no power at all against me unless it had been given to you from above. That is true. We don't have to worry about anything.

If someone has given power over us, it's given from above. It's given from God. We can accept it from Him.

And our faith tells us that God's power and His will are superior to military force, whether ours or the enemy's. Psalm 33, verses 16 through 21 says, No king is saved by the multitude of an army. A mighty man is not delivered by his great strength.

A horse is a vain hope for safety. Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the Lord. He is our help and our shield. Our hearts will rejoice in Him because we have trusted in His holy name.

That's what faith says. People are not kept safe by horses and armies. They're kept safe by the Lord.

He might use horses and armies, but our defense is not from them. Proverbs 21, verse 31 says, The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is from the Lord. Isaiah 31, verse 1 says, Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and who rely on horses, who trust in chariots because there are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel nor seek the Lord.

So that's what our faith tells us is that we can trust in God and not in warfare. We can obey God and trust our fate with Him. God is able to protect His people.

When Jesus rebuked Peter for taking his sword to defend him, Jesus said, Do you think that I cannot now pray to my Father and He will provide me with more than twelve legions of angels? Like, I don't need your sword, Peter. If God wants to deliver me, He's got His own resources. And that's what we have to believe, too.

We don't have to defend ourselves. If God tells us to, that's another story. But if He tells us not to, that's fine.

He can defend us if He wants to. Twelve legions of angels is enough. One angel of God can kill 185,000 soldiers in one night.

185,000 from one angel. If He has twelve legions of angels, He can take care of the whole world. Psalm 34, verse 7 says, The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him and delivers them.

And this, Psalm 27, 1-3, The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell.

Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident. In what? In God.

That's what faith is. Faith, hope, and love are the values of the kingdom. And, of course, as a Christian, my faith caused me to be resigned to the outcome that God has for me.

1 Peter 4, verse 19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good as to a faithful creator. So, our faith says God is in charge. God's will is what's more important.

I'm supposed to obey Him and trust Him with the outcome. He is able to defend me. I don't have to fear if armies come against me.

The Lord is my helper. What can man do to me? On the other hand, if man is permitted to do something to me, it's not because God wasn't available to help me. It's because He didn't choose to help me.

He wanted this to happen to me. The important thing is that I was obedient to Him and trusting Him with the outcome. Now, what about hope? Well, the main thing about hope is that our hope is in the resurrection.

Our hope is not in survival for a long time. It's not the Christian hope to live here for a long time in this life. The Christian hope is that we will die well when we die and we'll be resurrected and attain to the resurrection of the just.

Paul said, if in this life only we have hope in Christ Jesus, we are of all men most to be pitied. It's not this life that our hope is in. It's in the next.

And that's why, of course, self-defense and so forth are not automatically called for. Because we have higher values than to survive. And we're to be faithful unto death because our hope is that we'll be resurrected.

The final value I need to talk about is love. And this is where the specifics of our relationship to war kick in most directly. Because our faith tells us that we need to do, we can do what God wants us to do and we don't have to worry about enemies.

Because the enemies might kill us but our faith tells us that we'll go to heaven. And we've got hope and a resurrection. Or the enemies might not kill us.

People say, well, what if everyone became a Christian and didn't fight in war? Well, then God would have to save us, wouldn't He? And He could do that. He's done that before. He saved the Israelites a number of times without them fighting in war.

Including the time He sent the angel to kill the 185,000 Assyrians. The Israelites didn't have to shoot one arrow. Although they were besieged by a huge army.

There are times when God has shown that He can deliver. He delivered Israel from the Egyptians when they crossed the Red Sea. They didn't have to fight them.

God can supernaturally defend His people if He wants to. We've never yet seen a nation that was wholly committed to following Jesus. But He's even done miraculous deliverances for nations that weren't 100%.

Like Israel. So we can trust Him. But what in terms of our obligation? What is it? That's more defined by love.

And this is where Christians don't all make the same application. Matthew 5, 43 and 44, Jesus said, You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies.

Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. Now, if I were to go to war, I'd certainly be going against someone who hates me and who is an enemy and who curses me and so forth.

But those are just the people I'm told to do good to, to bless them and to love them. And I'm not sure how to do that and kill them at the same time. And Luke 6, 27 and 28 says, But I tell you who hear me, love your enemies.

Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you. It's the parallel in Luke.

The word is only a little different. Now, part of love is justice, that we do justly toward people. And this is an area where some Christians feel that the love ethic requires us to fight.

Because if there's victims of injustice, then godly people who love them will want to restore justice to them. It does say in Psalm 82, 3 and 4, Defend the poor and fatherless. Do justice to the afflicted and needy.

Deliver the poor and needy from the hand of the wicked. Now, of course, this is an Old Testament statement and it's not clear exactly if this is incumbent on us now to deliver people from the hand of the wicked. But let's say it was.

That doesn't necessarily mean that it's through warfare that we do this. Of course, in the Old Testament they did that through war. But justice isn't always served in warfare.

Sometimes it's not just the poor and needy that get rescued. Some of the poor and needy get killed in war. Especially in modern wars.

We can try to do surgical strikes on military targets. But in the course of a full-fledged war, it's never limited to just those. The enemy hides among the civilians.

And we either let the enemy go or we kill the civilians with them. And, you know, justice isn't generally served in war. Maybe the outcome is a better outcome in some cases.

I say, World War II, we have a more just peace as a result of World War II than it would have been if we hadn't fought Hitler. Maybe. It's hard to know what God would have done to Hitler if Christians had committed themselves to the spiritual warfare they're supposed to do.

If you read the book Reese Howell's *Intercessor*, he's a man who ran a Bible school in Wales during both World Wars. And during those World Wars, he and his school were on their faces interceding to God for his will to be done. And they would have certain times of day where they'd get a witness in their spirit that something changed in the battle.

They haven't heard any news, but they'd look at the clock, they'd note it, the date, they'd read the newspapers the next day, and so many times the moment that they felt that their prayers were answered was the moment that the fascist troop retreated, defeated from some particular place. And again and again this happened, that God gave them the witness that he'd answered their prayers and they later found out exactly what had happened. There was some enemy defeated.

Very few Christians have experimented to find out what power there is in the spiritual warfare of the Christians in a wartime situation. We too quickly grab arms and just resort to carnal weapons and we don't really very often give spiritual warfare an opportunity to produce what it could produce. Love, in addition to being interested in justice, is interested in mercy, and mercy is expressed toward bad people who don't deserve it.

That's what mercy is about. It's undeserved kindness. And Jesus said in Matthew 5, 38 through 42, You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I tell you not to resist an evil person, but whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other ear to him also.

If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him too. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you, do not turn away.

So, Jesus indicated that when people provoke you and do things that are insulting and harmful to you, to do an act of kindness back to them is the distinctively Christian response. And although it is true, as is pointed out by people who support just war, it is true that Jesus is talking about personal relations with individuals. He's not addressing directly the subject of international conflicts between armies.

Nonetheless, a Christian, I think, is supposed to look at armies as so many individuals.

And the Iraqi who wants to blow me up is an individual. He may see himself as part of an army of resistance to our side.

And our troops see themselves as an army resisting them. But to the Christian, that man is a soul for whom Christ died. And somebody who I'm told to love as someone who hates me, as someone who wants to destroy me.

He can't destroy me. He can kill me, but he can't destroy me. But I could destroy him easily enough.

If I shot him, then he's destroyed. I believe that the Christian, in being told not to resist evil in this way, not to retaliate, is actually being called upon to leave the destruction of wicked men in the hands of God. And to let God decide when a sinner should die.

Because we might pick the time for a sinner to die, and it's not the right time. Suppose the early church had decided Saul must die. You know, he's thrown us in jail.

He's wreaking havoc in the church. Even internationally. He's going to Damascus to persecute Christians.

We've got to take this guy out. Well, that would have been a huge tragedy if they'd taken him out. Because he turned out to be the Apostle Paul.

And you don't know any given sinner, any given enemy what God may have in store for him at a later date when he won't be an enemy if he lives long enough. But if I decide I think he's lived long enough. It's time for me to take him out.

Well, I'm taking God's prerogatives on myself, it seems to me. It seems like God is the one who holds life and death in His hand. Daniel told Belshazzar, you have not honored the God who holds your breath in His hands.

It's God who decides how long you breathe. And if He told Joshua to kill these people, then God decided they should die. But if He hasn't told me to kill anyone, then I can't know that me going over and killing these people is God's vengeance on them.

It might be my vengeance on them and I might be going against what God wanted for their lives. I simply would rather suffer wrong than inflict wrong. I believe this was the Christian ethic for the first 300 years because they understood the nature of Christ and the nature of the Kingdom of God and the nature of eternity and things that set Christians apart from non-Christians in the issues related to this.

I want to just address as quickly as I can the question of Christians in military because these things have to do with if your friend, if someone slaps you, you turn the other cheek. That's not exactly a military scenario. But what about Christians in the military? Now, in saying this, I want to make this very clear.

I believe Christians who are better Christians than I am, some of them are in the military. Okay? I want to make that clear. I don't think that a Christian in the military is a bad Christian.

A Christian in the military is a Christian who sees the issues differently than I do. But that's not unusual. Christians all over the world see all kinds of issues differently than I do.

They're not required to agree with me. Christians are required to answer to God and to read His Word and do what they believe He's saying. If they've read His Word and in their conscience they think God told them to go to the military, I disagree.

But that's not my business. Who am I to judge another man's servant? If they're doing the wrong thing, God knows how to reach them. It's not for me to condemn them.

So, when I say something disparaging about Christians going to the military, I'm not trying to cast a blot upon the wonderful Christian people who are in the military or who have historically gone in the military. That's not mine to do. As far as I'm concerned, they may love Jesus more than I do.

And they just understand the issues differently than I do. That's very commonplace. And I'll tell you the truth.

While I don't believe Christians belong in the military, when I imagine actual Christians I know in the military, my picture of a Christian in the military is of a very godly, humble man. Of a Holy Joe kind of a guy in the military. I really don't picture Christians who are bloodthirsty, Rambo types.

I picture Christians who went in there, fresh-faced, young Christian men straight out of Sunday school, you know, who went over to defend their mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters from what they think is the devil. And they're over there and they love God and they're taking persecution from their fellow soldiers because they pray and read their Bibles. In my opinion, an awful lot of Christians in the military are wonderful, wonderful Christians.

I don't want to disparage that. The question we're addressing is not, how shall we view Christians who go in the military? The question is, should Christians go in there? To me, it's like the question, how shall I view a Christian who's pre-millennial? Well, I should view him as a brother. I shouldn't think badly of him at all.

But should he be pre-millennial? I don't think so. But the fact that he is, is not going to put him on my bad side. It's not for me to alienate myself from him.

It's for me to say, here's what I think we're supposed to do. And you are not obligated to agree with me. And I'm not obligated to make you agree with me.

I'm just obligated to tell you. And then it's between you and God. If you go a different direction, maybe God will be more pleased with you than with me.

But I'm still going to tell you what I think he says. Here's what Tertullian said on this very thing in his treatise on idolatry. He says, but now inquiry is made about this point.

Whether a believer may turn himself unto military service and whether the military may be admitted into the faith. Even the rank and file, or each inferior grade, to whom there is no necessity for taking part in sacrifices or capital punishment. There is no agreement between the divine and human sacrament, the standard of Christ and the standard of the devil, the camp of light and the camp of darkness.

One soul cannot be due to two masters, God and Caesar. When I was a conscientious objector, I had to fill out a form to file for this, and one of the questions was, would you as a conscientious objector object to being in the military in a non-combatant role? And I said, yes, I would object. Now, some might say, on what basis? Well, obviously, not on a non-violence platform, because non-combatant role isn't violence.

But here's how. It was this very scripture that Tertullian quoted, though I'd never read his statement at the time. Jesus said, no man can serve two masters.

Now, of course, in a sense, every Christian who has a job is serving a master other than God, but he can quit his job if he wants to. Even a Christian who's a policeman or something else can still serve Christ, because if, as a policeman, he's obligated to do something that a Christian shouldn't do, he can quit. But when you join the army, you can't just say, ah, I changed my mind.

I think I'll leave. You're signing on for a certain number of years, and you're swearing allegiance to an entity that is run by people who may not be Christians, and you're obviously taking an oath of obedience to the military officers, and who knows what they're going to ask you to do. Now, most Christians say, well, if they told me to do something awful, I wouldn't do it.

Well, then you shouldn't go in. Did you tell them that when you went in? When you went in, did you say, now, I'm signing on provisionally. I will obey you as long as I don't disagree morally with anything you tell me to do.

They're going to say, that's not how you come in here, buddy. You come in here as a full, committed, obedient soldier. And if you, at the last moment, say, I don't think I like what I'm told to do, I'm not going to do it, well, then you're violating your oath.

Better not to take an oath at all, the Bible says, than to make an oath and break it. The military isn't just like another job, which you could quit, for conscious sake. You can't just quit your military position for conscious sake, at least not until you've served your time.

And therefore, you are truly serving another master who has claim on your time, same kind of claim that God really wants to have on you. In addition to serving two masters, you're also unequally yoked with unbelievers in a project. And yoked, you know, yoked, you can't get out of.

Once again, if you're working in a job with unbelievers, if there's some compromise that's happening there and you're required to participate, you don't have to. You can get out. You can quit.

You say, I quit on principle. But in the military, you can't just do that. You're part of a force and that force does all kinds of things, some of which are things you as a Christian couldn't improve on.

We all know that in Vietnam, for example, there were a few cases, if not many, we know of a few, where our troops were actually told to go in and just wipe out the whole village. Women and children. I mean, there have been people who've testified to this.

They were in Vietnam and that's what they were told to do. Now, can a Christian do that? Could a Christian refuse to do that in the military? If they're going to refuse to do that, they shouldn't sign on carte blanche and say, I will follow orders, when those orders may turn out to be something like that. Or in Hitler's Germany, there were Christians in the military.

I stayed in the home of a Christian man in 1972 who had served in Hitler's army as a Christian. A lot of them didn't know exactly all that was going on with the death camps. He certainly wouldn't have approved.

This Christian man would never have put Jews in an oven. But if he was told to do so as part of the military, he's supposed to do it. That's the oath you take.

That's the promise you make when you join. And you shouldn't make promises that you can't keep. And especially when you're swearing on to be joined together with unbelievers in unequal yoking where you may be asked to follow orders that you can't predict what they will be.

But we know one thing, one thing's predictable, is in the course of a war, both sides are going to do atrocious things. It's a given. And if you're saying, I'm voluntarily going into this war, I'm going to join with the troops that are fighting this war, it may be your company that's told to do those atrocious things.

It may be you as an individual. I personally feel that while I don't limit Christians from being in government, hosts of all kinds. I think some Christians can serve, if God calls them, into certain government offices, which the early Christians didn't think so.

I don't believe a Christian should be in any post that by nature involves him in a conflict

of interest with his Christian convictions. Sure, you could have a military career in peacetime and never have to shoot anyone or do anything. But that's not what the military is for.

The military by definition is for killing people and breaking things. That's what the military exists to do. Now, true, a good military is there to only do it in self-defense, but it's still about killing people and breaking things.

Is that a vocation that Christians should define themselves by? I don't think so. Even if they could go a long time without killing any people or breaking anything, they're joining a force that defined purpose. It's to be there to kill people when they need to be killed.

Frankly, as much as I believe some wonderful godly people are in the military, and I believe that once they're there, God actually uses them. If a Christian was asking me whether I felt a Christian has a valid role in the military, I would generally say no. Some might say, what about a chaplain? A chaplain is an officer and he has to take oaths too.

The early Christians, one reason they didn't want to join the military, in addition to the killing and so forth, was that they had to sacrifice and do reverence to standards and things like that. Things they thought were idolatrous. Well, you know, American soldiers have to show reverence to certain symbols and things like that, that we as American Christians don't object to it.

Saluting the flag, nationalism is not considered idolatry by most American Christians, but why isn't it? Think of what people will give up for their country that they won't give up for God. Think of how people will ration their provisions and live in foxholes and so forth for their country, but ask them to go on a mission if you'll do that for the kingdom of God, they'd balk. I don't want to live like that.

I don't want to go to Africa and live in the jungles. Oh, but you'll go as a soldier and be in the jungles and have the same discomforts and so forth, but you'll do it for your country. But you'd be not really very eager to do it for God.

Is that not making one's country an idol? If you would sacrifice for your country, you wouldn't sacrifice for God? I've never understood how nationalism could be anything other than idolatry for the Christian. Anything that I would have allegiance to that would conflict with my allegiance to God is potentially an idol. And if there's ever a conflict between those two allegiances and I would go with the other than God, then it is an idol.

And I think an awful lot of Christians just kind of turn a blind eye to American nationalism and its extreme forms of patriotism. And I'm not anti-America. I'm glad to be an American, but I'm even gladder to be a citizen of the kingdom of God.

And I don't want to betray that government that I'm a citizen of. And I think I serve America best by being the best Christian I can and by being the most loyal citizen to

Jesus Christ that I can be. And that is what I think is a Christian perspective on this.
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