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War and Peace (Part 1)



Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg explores the topic of war and peace from a Christian perspective. He discusses the history of Christian attitudes towards war, with some early Christian figures such as Polycarp and Tertullian opposing participation in warfare. Gregg argues that while the Bible does offer some support for war, it also emphasizes the importance of trusting in God rather than weapons and of leaving vengeance to God. Overall, he suggests that Christians should seek to avoid war if possible and place their faith in God's ultimate judgment.

Transcript

We are in the midst of a series of talks called Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture. And last time, the subject we covered I entitled The Culture of Life Confronts the Culture of Death. We talked about how Satan's realm is the realm of death and Christ's realm is the realm of life.

And Christ's realm is the realm of life. And when we become Christ's people, we become life-affirming. We become life-promoting.

And we live in the midst of a culture that is death-affirming and death-promoting. And we see it in, of course, abortion and euthanasia and not even just abortion, but actual infanticide. I'm sure many of you remember several years ago, the incident with Baby Doe, a baby that was actually born, healthy except with Down syndrome, but the parents didn't want the baby.

And so it was not permitted to be fed. And there were people from all over the country writing in saying they'd adopt the baby, but the parents didn't want it adopted. They wanted it to die.

And the courts upheld the parents' right to let the baby starve to death. It died under medical supervision without any care, though there was nothing about the situation that required that it die, except the parents didn't want it. And the parents were considered to be very courageous to take that step, letting a baby die when there was no reason to let a baby die except that it was unwanted.

But that's just another symptom that we live in a culture of death. In talking about those things last time, we also touched on subjects like that of capital punishment and war. And when we did come to that point, I realized that we would need to take some additional time just to discuss the subject of war, because it is not a small subject.

It is a major subject, as a matter of fact. It is, well, war has sometimes been called mankind's chief collective sin. War has been called the crime that includes all other crimes.

There has never yet been a war where there wasn't also stealing and lying and rape and other, almost every other kind of crime associated with it. War is simply a huge collective crime. Now, it would be amazing if Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, would have come to earth and would have taught his disciples about things necessary for life and godliness, things that should guide them in their lives from that point on, distinctively living in such a way as to bring glory to God in all their actions, and had not given any clues as to how they ought to view the subject of war.

Now, the interesting thing is that Jesus never did directly address it as an ethical issue. Jesus never said, for example, thou shalt not fight in war. Nor did he say thou shalt fight in war.

He never took war as a subject in and of itself in order to give specific detailed instruction about it. Situations of war were sometimes mentioned in some of his parables, kings going to war and so forth, but he did not really, even those parables were not really discussing the subject of the ethics of war. And one of the reasons for that probably was that in the time when Jesus and his disciples lived, there really was not any active hot warfare going on in the region of Palestine.

Rome had conquered the world a generation earlier, almost two generations earlier. And because of that, although there were soldiers on every street corner, Roman soldiers, there was not really any battling going on except out in the fringes of the empire, out in the barbarian lands. And that was so far removed in days without television, without newspapers and so forth, that the average person in Palestine would never have any kind of information or dealings with those peripheral wars.

And there just was not an occasion that came up for Jesus to directly address the subject of war. Besides which, the Jews would not have been probably subject to anything like a draft into the Roman army. And the Jews were not allowed to have their own army because they were vassals paying tribute to Rome.

So, there really was not an occasion for Jesus to discuss this. Now, there were a few occasions where Jesus encountered Roman soldiers, like the man who came who had a servant who was sick and he was a centurion, an officer in the Roman army. And Jesus commended his faith and Jesus healed his servant.

But we do not read, after this man came to faith in Christ, what his relationship was with the Roman army after that. Did he continue to be in it? Did he leave the army? We have no information. He may have stayed in the Roman army until the day of his death.

Cornelius, likewise, in the New Testament, in the book of Acts, Peter actually preaches the gospel to the household of this Roman centurion. And the man is converted with his whole household. It is often pointed out that Peter, as far as we know, did not tell him to leave the Roman army.

On the other hand, we are not told that he did not tell him to leave the Roman army. We simply are given no information at all about the later discipleship of this man. We read of his conversion, then the story in the book of Acts shifts to something else.

And it is unlikely that, in the case of the apostles leading such a man to the Lord, that they would give him no instruction whatsoever to guide him in his later vocation in life. We do not know what that instruction may have been. The silence of the scripture on the subject sometimes encourages Christians to say, well, there is certainly no objection to serving in the military, expressed by Jesus or the apostles.

And I suppose it would be true to say that they do not express any objection directly about that. It should also be pointed out, however, that the Roman army was not fighting any wars. They had already conquered the world.

And for that reason, the Roman soldiers really were more of a police force, more of a peacekeeping occupational force in Palestine. And it is very possible that a soldier might live his whole life in that particular generation, in the Roman army, without really conducting himself in any warfare at all. So it is hard to say.

We do know that the later church fathers, I should say later than the apostles, the very early church fathers for the first three centuries, all were opposed to Christians fighting in war. Now, that does not mean that they had the mind of God on it. In fact, there were some things the church fathers said that I feel they did not have scriptural support for.

But we do know, whether that is here or there, I do not know, but that the early fathers, all of them, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Justin Martyr, these guys, they all spoke out against Christians participating in any warfare. It is sometimes argued that the reason these church fathers opposed Christians being in the army was simply that the Roman army required soldiers to burn incense to statues of Caesar and so forth, and the idolatrous practices that were practiced by the Roman soldiers were what the church fathers were concerned about and felt like it would be impossible for Christians to serve in that role without being compromised in the area of idolatry. However, if one reads the actual remarks of the church fathers I brought with me, many I probably will not get around to reading tonight, but I have probably, I would imagine, about a dozen or more quotes from the church fathers with me who opposed Christians fighting in war,

and only once does one of them mention the idolatrous practices of the Roman armies.

All the others mention that Christ forbids His disciples to kill, forbids His disciples to resist those who would hurt them, that Christ calls us to never retaliate and not to defend ourselves. This is at least how they interpreted Christ's sayings. And that was the view of the early church for 300 years.

Now, that changed with the conversion of Constantine. Constantine himself was a Roman emperor, obviously the commander of armies in Rome. He became a professing Christian.

Whether his conversion is genuine or not, nobody knows. He refused to be baptized until his deathbed, and in many ways he didn't seem to be a Christian, but in other ways he did seem to be a Christian. There's a big ongoing debate no one will be able to resolve until we go to heaven whether Constantine is there or not.

But Constantine at least professed to be a Christian, and he made Christianity acceptable and a non-persecuted religion and official as the leading religion of the Roman Empire. That, of course, came to be viewed as a merger of the church and the state so that those who had formerly seen themselves as the persecuted church, persecuted by the state, were now friendly with the state and the state friendly with them. And the state's warfare was considered to be the concern not only of the state but also of the church.

And so it became commonplace for Christians to fight in the military, and it has remained so to the present time. Everyone knows that during the medieval times, the Roman Catholic Church had its own armies and also blessed the armies of the countries in which it was ruling or influential. One of the ironies of this, I remember during the Falkland Island War, probably most of you are old enough to remember that, not too many decades ago.

Was that 20 years ago, probably? Remember the Pope? On a particular day, he blessed the armies of Great Britain as they were going off to fight the Argentines at the Falkland Islands. Then he flew down to Argentina and blessed the armies of the Argentines as they were going off to fight the Brits at the Falklands. A situation which underscored the rather ethical confusion that is related to Christianity seeing itself as a participant in the world's wars.

But that confusion has existed ever since the time of Constantine. In the Reformation, Luther and Calvin and Zwingli all agreed that Christians should fight in the nation's wars. In fact, Zwingli, the reformer in Switzerland who corresponded to Luther in Germany, actually died young in battle.

He was out fighting Roman Catholics. He and his Swiss Reformed armies were out

fighting Roman Catholic armies. Zwingli, the reformer, had his ministry cut short because he was killed on the battlefield while he was fighting.

Luther didn't die that way, nor Calvin, but they believed in war. And the Reformed faith has always felt, as the Roman Catholic faith has, that the fortunes of nations are directly related to the fortunes of the church that lives in those nations, and that Christians ought to fight in the nation's wars. Shortly after the Reformation began, which was about 500 AD, about 25 years later, there arose within the Reformed land of Switzerland, and later in the Netherlands and in Germany and other parts of Europe as well, what's called the Anabaptist movement, sometimes called the Radical Reformation.

The Anabaptists challenged many of the things the Reformers had taken for granted, many of the things the Reformers had just brought on over from Roman Catholicism, including infant baptism, merger of church and state, and several things that the Reformers had simply carried as baggage out of their Roman Catholic background into their reforms. But the Anabaptists said, wait a minute, we need to look at this again. The Bible doesn't teach infant baptism.

The Bible doesn't teach that the church is wedded to some political institution, some state somewhere, some government of man. And one of the corollaries of that the Anabaptists came up with is that Christians are supposed to love their enemies. There is no nation on earth, the fortunes of which are the fortunes of the kingdom of God.

And therefore, Christians have no need to be involved, or in fact, they would say it's immoral for Christians to be involved in combat. In other words, the Anabaptists returned to what was the unanimous view of the church for the first three centuries before Constantine's time on this subject. Today, depending on who you read, the majority of the church is either reformed in its thinking about war, or it is Anabaptistic in its thinking about war.

I say depending on who you read, because I read, I am somewhat Anabaptistic, I'll let you know at the beginning. I've never been an Anabaptist in the sense of belonging to an Anabaptist denomination, but my own reading of the scripture inclines me toward a more Anabaptistic view. But I have read at least ten books, and I have more than that I intend to read, by Christians who believe other than this, who are reformed.

And I'm going to, in the course of this, I'm going to interact somewhat with their arguments. But reformed Christians in their books always seem to say that the evangelical church has gone pacifist. I have not noticed.

In fact, it's very unusual to find Christians who've gone pacifist, unless you're looking at the Amish, or the Mennonites, or the Quakers, because those are about the only denominations left that are officially pacifist, and maybe a few people in other denominations are personally pacifist. I don't much care for the word pacifist. It's not a

biblical word, and it is confusing what it means.

In some senses, I would be called a pacifist because of some of my views, but the Mennonites wouldn't agree with me, and the Quakers wouldn't agree with me. My own views are not based on any camp called pacifism at all. In fact, many people get confused because they think pacifism is related to the word passive, like passive-ism.

And that's not it. Pacifism is related to the Latin word for peace, pax. And pacifism is those who believe in promoting peace.

Now, of course, everybody would say they believe in promoting peace, even people who go to war do so because they would say they want to promote peace, and you just can't have peace when there's bad guys around, unless you defeat the bad guys, then you can have peace, responsible peace. And so all people, in a sense, are for peace, and therefore the word pacifism doesn't communicate very much, except that probably the person who's called that is opposed to Christians fighting in war. On the other hand, most pacifists are also against capital punishment, and against all forms of resistance.

They're all into every kind of non-resistance. People who are called pacifists often are uniformly opposed to all forms of forcible resistance, and their position would largely be that they just trust God and leave all these things in God's hands. Now, if that's what a pacifist is, I'm not a pacifist, and I'm an unusual mix on this as well as many other subjects.

I don't like the label pacifist for that reason. I would rather just be called a follower of Jesus Christ, because I don't take the pacifist camp, or the Anabaptist camp, or the Reform camp, or the Catholic camp, and say, yeah, that's my camp right there, that's what I want to join them. My position is, in this whole series, that Christians need to stop thinking in terms of what camp they or their ancestors have been in, and decide what did Jesus say, and what does it mean to be a radical follower of his.

It means to take his approach to all subjects. In my own case, I'll give you my position, but I will say this too. While I will give you arguments for my position tonight, next week I'm going to give you arguments for the other position.

I'm going to answer those arguments, but there are something like 34 arguments for the position that advocates Christians going to war. I wanted to share those tonight, but I won't have time, so I'll get to those next time. We'll actually have a time where I'll share what I believe the Bible teaching is in the New Testament, as I understand it, then I'd like to interact with some of the arguments of those who take a different view.

And I think those who take a different view are probably in the majority in the Evangelical Church. And that being so, it is not my desire to attack people who disagree with my position. Frankly, it's not really my desire to convince anybody.

I'm not a prophet, I'm a teacher. And as such, I simply want to present the biblical information as coherently as I can, and leave it to every man's conscience to decide what they should do. After all, if I would tell you, you should not resist a person who's coming to kill you, and I was wrong, I wouldn't want to bear that responsibility.

I'd rather tell you what I believe is the position of Scripture, give you the Scripture that I use, and let you make up your own mind, and I will not condemn anybody who reaches a different conclusion than I do, but I'll let you know why I think what I think. How's that sound? Fair enough? All right. Now, primary considerations.

When we approach any subject about which we had preconceived notions before we were Christians, it is important that we recognize our prejudices, because it is very commonplace for us to read the Bible through the grid of what we already believed, or what we already approved of, what we already thought was right. And a very good case can be made for Christians going to war. And, of course, non-Christians also believe in going to war.

So, when a person becomes a Christian, he believed in going to war before, and he hears some decent arguments in favor of going to war as a Christian, it's easy to say, well, that's obviously what the Bible teaches. And maybe it is. I would say this, since Jesus didn't speak directly to the subject of war, it is not all that easy to know, and that's why it is an unsettled question even still among evangelicals.

But the reason it is possible to settle it, I think, is that while Jesus didn't address the subject of war, there are larger principles that Jesus did teach, which we have to extrapolate to situations that he didn't particularly use as illustrations. But we do have prejudices. All of us do.

We all come to the Scripture with having already some opinion on the subjects that are addressed there. And it's possible that the Scriptures could have the potential of correcting our views, but we don't see that the Scriptures are contrary to our views because we read them through the grid of our prejudices. I have this problem.

You have this problem. We all have this problem. And that is something we need to be aware of as we search for the mind of God.

Now, we must be aware of the degree to which we have bought into the worldly culture. And this is true of many pacifists too. You see, a lot of pacifists in my generation were hippies.

And they were pacifists because they were against the war in Vietnam as a political issue. And also because they were terrified to go there. And, you know, let's face it, pacifism is a position that can be taken for cowardly reasons.

Now, the early Christians weren't taken as cowards. It takes a rather courageous person

to stand there as people are hacking you to pieces or doing whatever you want to say, I will not resist because I don't believe Christ wants me to resist. A person who lives in a land where there has never been a war on their own shores, and going to war means going somewhere else to go to war, it is easy for that person to take a pacifistic position, meaning only that he is afraid to go to war and doesn't want to stick his neck out.

And it is entirely possible for a person either to take a pacifist position or the opposite position, not based on any real scriptural data they have considered, but based on their prior buying into either a cowardly, hippie type of mentality, or, on the other hand, some kind of a macho, patriotic kind of a mentality. Both mentalities exist outside of Christianity. This is something we have to make sure we know.

In this series on radically Christian counterculture, we are talking about that which is radically and distinctively Christian. And while the position you end up taking on war may in some sense end up agreeing with this or that camp outside the church on the subject, your reasons have got to be that you take your position because Jesus Christ says so, and you have no alternative as a follower of His but to embrace what He said. That is my position.

It has been my position for 30 years. And that is the position we have to take on this as well as any other subject. We have to realize that our reasoning may be based on worldly propositions, presuppositions.

We presuppose certain things, and from those we reason, of course we should do this or of course we should not do that. And we need to be careful about that. We are in danger of believing really what we most want to believe.

That is really the biggest tendency of us all. We believe what we want to believe. If there is a war in Vietnam and I do not want to go there and get my head blown off, and therefore it is convenient for me to take a pacifist position and say I am a conscientious objector so I do not have to go, well, if that is what I really want to believe, I am likely to read it into all the scriptures and kind of ignore scriptures that go against that.

On the other hand, if I am very strongly in favor of defending my rights and my country and my family and my life and my freedoms and all that, my property, then we are going to pretty much want the scripture to tell us that we can fight for these things if they are challenged. So, again, these are where our prejudices need to be identified. One way or the other, we probably lean one way or the other.

Now, you might lean the way you do because you have studied it out in the scripture, you have meditated long on the scripture, and you have been convinced from the scripture that the position of Christ is X. But I dare say if you are like most Christians or even better Christians than most, there is a good chance you have never done a thorough study of the word of God on this subject, and you have assumed that you know

what the Bible says on it, or you know a few things that the Bible says which you have applied to the subject and that has satisfied you that you now know the teaching of scripture. Let me tell you, this subject of war is a very nuanced subject. I have been thinking about it, reading about it, teaching, writing on it for 30 years, and I still confess to you I am not 100% sure that I know exactly what should be done in every case in every war.

But I will tell you there are some principles that Christians need to be thinking about very carefully if they want to be Christians in the sense of the word that that word means, followers of Christ. Now, in the notes I have given you, you can see I have got some major points. I want to talk about the biblical theology of war, first of all.

Might as well start there, because whatever God wants us to do is related to his overall viewpoint on the subject of war. Then I want to talk to you a little bit about what is called the just war theory, a major, probably the predominant viewpoint in evangelical circles today. Then I want to talk about the Christian ethics of forcible resistance, which will of course have an application to war, but also other situations where forcible resistance may be called for or may present itself as an option.

And finally, I want to talk about the Christians' relationship to the domicile nations in which they live. The domicile nation, of course, refers to like if you are in the military, you are an ambassador, you are a representative of some company or some nation and you live overseas, the country you live in is your domicile nation, your home. You have made your home there, even though that is not really your citizenship.

Our citizenship is in heaven, but we all live in a domicile nation. Ours is America. Every other Christian lives in some domicile nation too.

Some live in Canada, some in England, some in Germany, some in Russia, some in China, some in Cuba, some in North Korea, some in South Korea. Obviously, it gets tricky. What is the relationship of the Christian, biblically speaking, to the domicile nation in which he lives? How involved is he supposed to be? I would like to explore those subjects and I believe that they will help us toward an understanding of a radically Christian view of this subject.

I am calling this lecture, The Culture of Peace. My own copy has a typo. I don't know if all of them do.

The culture of peace confronts the culture of war. No one can deny that the worldly culture is a culture of war, whether we are talking about international conflict, whether we are talking simply about feuds or simply hostilities that are prolonged between individuals or families or clans. But of course, the biggest and most troublesome of these are international wars.

There is a culture, as the predominant culture of the world is the culture of death, it is also the culture of war. As the Christian counterculture is a culture of life, it is also a culture of peace. But not an irresponsible peace.

Not a Pollyanna, head in the clouds kind of idea of peace. Peace is sterner stuff than that. And the Christian has to acknowledge that an awful lot of what God accomplishes in the world he does through interruptions in peace, which we call war.

Now, there is a biblical teaching on war. It starts in the Old Testament and it works all the way through. We don't find any different theology of war in the New Testament than we have in the Old.

I'll say that again. The New Testament does not present a different theology of war than the New Testament does. In fact, it affirms the same theology of war.

Now, it is not the same thing as saying it teaches the same thing about soldiery or about Christian's participation, but it does teach throughout both testaments a seamless teaching on the subject of what war is. And war, in order to see it biblically, has to be seen on two levels. There is God's level, the divine level, on the one hand, and then there is the human level.

On the divine level, we are talking about how God's sovereignty functions in the world. God works through things that aren't even good. We know that when Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, that was not a good thing for people to do.

To sell your brother into slavery is not nice and it's not good. But afterwards, Joseph said to them, You intended evil against me, but God meant it for good. God sovereignly works through even the evil works.

The Bible says in James, The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. Well, war is certainly the wrath of man. And James said, The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

But in the Psalms it says, He makes even the wrath of man to praise Him. And the remainder of the wrath He will restrain. So, even though the wrath of man, from our point of view, is not right, we shouldn't use the wrath of man to promote the righteousness of God.

Yet, in the sovereign, overarching, coordinating of all things, in God's purposes, He even uses that and makes that to praise Him. He can carry forward His purposes for His kingdom, regardless what man throws His way as raw material, God can put it together into something that promotes His program. Now, on the divine level then, which is the distinctly Christian way to view war, we have to note, first of all, the Bible teaches that war is used by God to judge wicked nations.

One of the teachings of Scriptures is that God is the King over all the kings of the earth. And that He raises up kings and He brings down kings. He says that in Daniel chapter 2. He says it in Daniel chapter 4. The most high rules over the affairs of man and the kingdoms of men.

And He gives it to whoever He wants to. He raises up kings and He brings down kings. God is the one who molds the political texture of the world.

God is the one who says, Okay, this guy has outlived his usefulness. He is out. This new guy is in.

This system called Communism, it prevailed here for 70 years. I am replacing it with who knows what. You know, I mean, just something else.

God just kind of shapes and molds history according to the purposes He has in mind for its ultimate outcome. In the course of doing so, one of the things that He uses, and certainly one of the things that very commonly results in the fall of one king and the rise of another, is war. War is one of the ways.

Sometimes military coups are recorded in Scripture as used of God. Sometimes it is outright fierce warfare. God uses war.

In Ezekiel 14, 21, Ezekiel is talking about God's judgment coming on Jerusalem for its idolatry. He says, For thus saith the Lord God, How much more when I send my four sword judgments on Jerusalem? Here they are. The sword, which is simply a shorthand for war.

Actually, longhand for war. War is a shorter word. But the sword and the famine and the noisome beast and the pestilence to cut off from it man and beast.

Now, these are the four sword judgments. The four severe judgments that God sends against Jerusalem. The sword is one of them.

War, in other words. He is bringing the Babylonians. Those are armies.

They are going to fight. They are going to destroy. They are going to judge.

God says He is sending them as part of His judgment upon them. In Isaiah 10, We have a prophecy about how the Assyrians were going to come and be the instruments of God's judgment in 722 B.C. against the northern kingdom of Israel. In Samaria, its capital.

If you don't know much about Old Testament history, I don't have time to go into detail. But Israel divided into two kingdoms in the days of Rehoboam. The northern kingdom had ten tribes.

The southern kingdom had two. The northern kingdom was called Israel. The southern

kingdom, Judah.

Both of them did evil in the sight of the Lord. And both were judged. Judah, as we just read in Ezekiel, was judged by the Babylonians.

The northern kingdom was judged earlier by the Assyrians. And that was God's judgment. And it says, here is God in Isaiah 10, verses 5 and 6, speaking to the Assyrians, as it were, through the prophet.

O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger. That is, the Assyrian is God's rod that He is using in anger against the wicked people. And the staff in their hand is my indignation.

I will send him, that is the Assyrians, against a hypocritical nation, that is Israel. And against the people of my wrath, I will give him a charge to take the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire in the streets. In verse 15, he says, when the Assyrians take credit for their own victory, he says, Shall the axe boast itself against him that hews with it? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift itself up as if it were not wood.

What he is saying is, the Assyrian armies, they are conquering all these lands around, including Israel, and they pat themselves on the back for their victories. They don't have any right to congratulate themselves. They are like an axe or a saw in my hand.

They are like a tool, and I am the one who is using them. God, in other words, takes credit, takes responsibility, as it were, for being the one who brings about this situation of warfare as an act of judgment on a wicked people that deserve it. In Habakkuk 1.6, he says, For lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, he means of Judah, to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs.

So, again, it is talking about the Chaldeans, the Babylonians coming in and conquering Judah, coming to conquer the land, take the land, take their possessions. He says, I am raising them up. I am bringing them.

They are my instruments of judgment. In Matthew 22, we have the same teaching in the New Testament. Jesus tells a parable.

It actually applies to the Jews. How that a king made a wedding for his son. He sent out invitations to all his friends.

They made excuses and didn't come. And it says in verse 7, When the king heard that, that they rejected his invitations, he was wroth, and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. This is a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Jesus came, an invitation was put out to the Jews to

come, they made every excuse in the world to not come, and so God sent out his armies, the Roman armies in this case, and they burned up their city.

Then the king sent his messengers out to the Gentiles, far and wide, he says, go into the highways and byways, as many as you can find, bring them in, good and bad. So, the parable is about how the Jews had the first opportunity to come into the kingdom of God, they rejected it, and then God sent his messengers out to the Gentiles. But in between, he burned down the Jews' city.

And it's interesting, in the parable it says, The king, who is God in the parable, sent his armies and destroyed them and burned their city down. Well, who are they? They are the Jews. They are Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Who are the king's armies? Rome.

Now, did the Romans think they were God's servants? They couldn't have cared less. But you see, God used it. And Jesus taught that, that the Roman armies were the instruments of God to come and bring judgment.

In fact, he said it more plainly over in Luke chapter... Oh, I think it's Luke chapter 19, if I'm not mistaken. I don't have it in your notes. That might be too late in the book.

But, yeah, I think it's Luke 19. Maybe I should turn there. Jesus is speaking to Jerusalem of his own day.

And verse 42, he wept over the city and he said, If you had known... He's speaking to Jerusalem, Jesus is. If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace. But now they are hidden from your eyes, for the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you.

That's the Romans. Surround you and close you in on every side and level you and your children within you to the ground and they will not leave in you one stone upon another because you did not know the time of your visitation. Now, this happened to you because you didn't recognize me, he's saying.

Because you, Jerusalem, rejected me, the judgment of God is upon you and it will come in the form of your enemies. The army is coming, the Romans are coming. They're going to level you to the ground and leave not one stone standing on another.

Certainly, it's one of the teachings of the book of Revelation that when armies march, it is at the command of God, whether the armies know it or not. Because God is sovereign, He worked behind all these things. In Revelation 6, verses 1-4, John says, And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were, the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

Actually, some manuscripts just say, Come. He's saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a white horse came.

And he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come. And there went out another horse that was red, and power was given to it, or him that sat on it, to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another.

And there was given him a great sword. Here, certainly, we have emblems that represent war and conquest. And notice, when do these things march? They march when the Lamb on the throne breaks the seal and releases them and sends them.

And one of the inhabitants of heaven says, Come. And they come. Certainly, this is teaching that God is sovereign.

When armies march, they march under the sovereign command of God, whether they realize it or not. In Amos chapter 3 and verse 6, the prophet asks rhetorically, Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city? And in this case, the word evil means disaster. It's referring to war.

And the Lord has not done it. Interesting. Shall there be disaster in the city, and the Lord didn't do it? Now, what he's saying is, Of course not.

A disaster can't come to the city unless the Lord has done it. When these disasters come upon civil or national entities, it is the Lord's judgment upon them. That is the teaching of Scripture, Old and New Testament.

We've seen verses in both testaments making that point. A second part of the theology of war in the Bible is that even though God uses nations to judge other nations in war, that doesn't mean He's pleased with the nations that He uses. And He often will judge them next.

The book of Habakkuk brings this up. Because Habakkuk says, Okay, God, what's up? And God says, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to bring the Chaldeans down, the Babylonians.

They're going to come down and wipe out your whole country. And Habakkuk says, That doesn't make sense, God. They're more wicked than we are.

I mean, I'm not saying we don't deserve to be judged, but will you stand by silently while we are persecuted by one who's more wicked than we are? And God essentially answers him and says, Well, both of you are wicked. Babylon's wicked, Jerusalem's wicked. I'm going to judge you at the hands of them, and then I'll judge them later.

The fact that God uses an army to judge another nation doesn't mean He's pleased with the army He's using. It doesn't mean they're the good guys. They might even be worse than the people they're used to judge.

The fact is, if both nations are worthy of judgment, God is sovereignly at liberty to dispense with them in whatever order He wants. And just because a war ends up favorably for one side, it doesn't mean that the side that won is really God's favorite, or that they are the good guys in God's sight. He may yet judge them.

That's what we read in Isaiah 10, again talking about the Assyrians who are going to come and destroy the nation of Israel. God says in verses 12 and then in 24 and 25, He says, Wherefore it shall come to pass that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that is after Assyria has done their deed, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. Therefore thus says the Lord God of hosts, O my people that dwelleth in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian, he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee after the manner of Egypt, for yet a little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction.

So, God is using Assyria as a rod to beat on His people who deserve it. And then He says, But it's going to end up they're going to be destroyed too, because they're no good either. They're not good.

They're just my tool. In Zechariah chapter 1 and verse 15, after the Jews had returned from Babylonian captivity, God gave several visions to this prophet Zechariah. And in chapter 1 verse 15 He says, God says, And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease, for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.

What He means by that is, God intended to use these heathen to punish the Jews, but the heathen really got into it. I mean, God was a little bit displeased, and He did want to discipline the Jews, but these heathen really got enthusiastic about it, and really furthered the affliction more than they should have. And therefore, God was displeased with them, and they were going to have their day.

In Zechariah 14 verses 2 and 3 it says, For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished, and half the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. So, He says, First of all, I'm going to bring all the nations against Jerusalem, because she's ripe for judgment.

And then I'm going to go fight against the nations that I used to judge her. So, this is the consistent teaching throughout Scripture. God is sovereignly working in the military and political developments in geopolitics, basically.

God raises up kingdoms. He brings down kingdoms. He uses war for that.

Essentially, when a nation is wiped out in war, biblically speaking, that nation got judged

by God. But that doesn't mean that the nation that beat them was good. God may judge them next.

It's simply the case that God uses war, and the Bible teaches that without any shame or apology. Another part about the divine side of what the Bible teaches about war is that God is able to accomplish similar objectives without military force. This is important to note.

Because many people say, Well, of course we've got to fight more, because if we didn't, we'd lose our freedoms, and the bad guys would just trample us all over, and we'd all be dead. Well, maybe. Maybe not.

The Bible doesn't indicate that that's true. The Bible does indicate that God did indeed command His people at times in the Old Testament to go to war, but there were other times He commanded them not to, and He says, Now watch what I can do without you. And He was able to accomplish the same degree of victory, if not greater, without war, that He sometimes used war to accomplish.

God doesn't need human armies. He uses them because they're there. But He doesn't need them.

In Matthew 26, verses 52 and 53, when Peter tried to save Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane by drawing a sword and cutting off Malchus's ear, Jesus said to him, Put up again your sword into its place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? In other words, Peter, if God doesn't want me to be taken, fortunately, God has resources better than you and your swordsmanship. If I wanted to be delivered, I could call on God and He would send twelve legions of angels and that would be more than enough to take care of what you're trying to do.

And they'd do a better job than you would. And God is not short on resources to get His sovereign purposes done. He can use armies or He can just bypass armies, not use them at all.

We have an instance of that in Hosea 1.7. It says, But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen. Now, what he's referring to there is when the Assyrians had conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. They came down to Judah to try to take Jerusalem.

And God is saying, I'm going to save Judah. I'm going to save Jerusalem. I'm not going to let the Assyrians take them.

But I'm not going to save them with swords and bows and such as that. And do you know how He did it? The story is found in 2 Kings chapter 19, in verses 34 and 35. The king in

Jerusalem, Hezekiah, prayed to God.

He said, God, we're overwhelmed here. We're outnumbered. And please take care of us.

And that night, God sent an angel out to the camp of the Assyrians who were besieging the city. And the angel killed 185,000 of them before dawn. 185,000 casualties on the other side without the Israelites shooting one arrow or fighting at all.

God is able to take care of Himself. God is able to take care of His people. The question of whether we should fight in war should not be answered pragmatically.

Pragmatism is not fitting here. The pragmatic answer is, well, of course we need to fight in war or else we'll lose and fill in the blank. Well, we'll lose what God wants us to lose and nothing more.

It's not pragmatism. The question of whether we should fight in war or not should rest upon more like ethical or direct instructions from God about what we should do. Not on fears that God can't take care of us unless we carry a big peace or we're organized and so forth to resist and so forth.

Now, God might want Christians to do that. That is something worth discussing. We're going to look at that.

But we cannot decide that issue based on the pragmatic reasons that so many times people give. Well, who would take care of us if we don't take care of ourselves? Ever heard of God? Ever heard of angels? I haven't seen any of those lately. No? Haven't needed one lately.

A lot of times we take care of ourselves so well God doesn't have to do anything for us. But the fact is the theology of war in the Bible from God's perspective is God uses war to judge nations. The nations He uses might be bad guys too and He'll judge them second.

And also He can accomplish the same judgments upon a nation with or without military assistance. Now, from the human level the Bible also has things to say about war. The first of them is that that which motivates human beings in war is not very high motives.

Greed and lust, essentially. In Isaiah 7, which we've looked at already, has to do with the Assyrians coming against Israel. We know what God's motive is and He wants to judge them.

But what are their motives? Well, in Isaiah 10, 7, God says, I will send him against a hypocritical nation and against the people of my wrath I will give him a charge to take a spoil and to take a prey and to tread them down like the mire in the streets. Howbeit he, that is the Assyrian, meaneth not so. In other words, the Assyrian doesn't say, I'm going to serve God and bring judgment on these wicked Jews.

He's not even thinking along those lines at all. That's not what he means to do. It says, neither doth he in his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy and to cut off nations, not a few.

For he saith, this is verse 13 and 14, For he saith, by the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent, and I have removed the bounds of the people, and I have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like valiant men, and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people. And as one gathereth eggs that are left, I have gathered all the earth, and there was none that moved a wing or opened a mouth or peeped. This is what the Assyrian is saying.

I have gathered up all the riches of all these nations around me, because I was stronger than them. That's what motivated the Assyrians. Now, God had other motives for sending the Assyrians, but the Assyrians' motives were not very lofty.

Likewise, in the New Testament we have the same teaching. James 4, verses 1 and 2. From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust and have not. You kill and desire to have and cannot obtain.

You fight and war, yet you have not because you ask not. Now, both Testaments tell us that war from the human side is motivated by greed and lust. Another teaching from the human side about war in the Scripture is that victory in any battle does not necessarily automatically go to the superior force.

That is illustrated many, many times in Scripture. It is often the inferior force that wins. In fact, on occasions, God takes a rather impressive force and dwindles it down so it will be inferior enough for Him to use it.

And the story of Gideon is a remarkable case in point. Gideon's day, the Jews were occupied by Midianites. Twenty, thirty thousand of them were killed in a battle at Phos.

We know there were tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of Midianites there. Gideon calls, blows a trumpet, the Jews come who want to fight in the war. I don't remember what the exact number was at the beginning.

Several thousand responded. And God says, that's too many. We've got to thin the ranks here.

Tell anyone who's afraid, go home. So he did that and a whole bunch of them went home. And he says, there's still too many here.

And so he said, let's go down to the river and we'll get a drink. And the guys who put their face in the river were distinguished from the guys who picked up water in their hands and laughed like a dog. And God says, there's three hundred who picked up water

and laughed like a dog.

I'll deliver Israel from Midian with those three hundred. Send the others home. God didn't want so many because He doesn't want any flesh to glory in His sight.

God wanted to show that He can save by many or by few or by none at all. And because of that teaching of Scripture, it is never a given that the superior force will win. Let's put it this way.

The force that God wants to judge will lose. They might have the superior armies, but they will lose if God's mind is to judge them. In Joshua chapter 7, we have the story of how the Israelites fled with victory from their battle at Jericho where God caused the walls to fall down and God supernaturally intervened to help them win.

They went to the next town, not knowing that someone in their midst had stolen something that was consecrated to God. And God was angry with them, but they didn't know it at this point. They went to war.

The next town was a little town, Ai, not impressive. It says, they returned to Joshua and said to him, the spies came back and said, let not all the people go up, but let about 2,000 or 3,000 men go up and smite Ai, and make not all the people labor thither, for they are but a few people. So they went up thither of the people about 3,000 men, and they fled before the men of Ai.

And the men of Ai smote of them about 36 men, and they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim and smote them in the going down, whereof their hearts of the people melted and they became as water. The Israelites said, hey, we got to take 2,000 or 3,000 people. We'll overwhelm this little tiny town.

But the little tiny town beat them. You know why? Because there was sin in the camp of the Israelites, and God didn't want them to win. It's not the superior force that is guaranteed the victory.

It is whoever's side God happens to be on in this case. One of the more notable cases is in 2 Chronicles chapter 20. I won't turn you there because the whole chapter is notable, but basically King Jehoshaphat was attacked by a combined army from several nations around, an overwhelming majority.

He had no power to resist. He went and he prayed before God and says, God, we have no power to stand against this great enemy. Our eyes are upon you.

You have made promises to our ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and now we ask you to come and deliver us. A prophet came and said, Jehoshaphat, here's what God says. You will not have to fight in this battle.

It's the Lord's. The battle is the Lord's. You simply send the musicians out.

The armies can go out, but they won't have to fight. Send the musicians and the singers out ahead of the armies. And have them sing unto the Lord and praise the beauty of His holiness.

So they did that. And as the Israelites marched out and they just sang and worshipped God, God confused the enemies so they started killing each other off. And finally not one was left.

I'm not sure how the last one got taken out. Maybe he just ran home. But the fact is the entire huge armies were destroyed without the Israelites fighting at all.

The Israelites had the inferior military force, but they won because God wanted them to win. This is the teaching of Scripture. From the human side, the race is not to the swift, and the victory is not to the mightiest.

You know, let me just say this. Just aside from the issue of Christian involvement in war, just the whole idea of America and its armaments. I am not opposed at all to America being well armed.

It's a nation that's got a lot of enemies. But I will say this. The security of the nation will not rest on being a well armed nation.

We are very poorly armed now compared to what we used to be. But our security or our lack thereof is not directly related to that. If we succumb to enemies, it will not be because they had superior force.

They might or they might not. If we succumb, it will be because our nation has offended God, and God has chosen to judge it. And we could have star wars in the sky.

We can have ten missiles to every one of our enemies' missiles, and we could still lose if God wants us to lose. That's what the teaching of Scripture is about war. Now, that's again not related to the issue of whether we are involved in war, but that is a biblical teaching about war.

A third point of the biblical theology of war, related from the man's perspective, it's better to trust in God than in weapons of war. Obviously, since having better weapons doesn't mean you're going to win, but having God on your side is the security. So it's more important for a nation to be holy than to be well armed.

Both may be okay, but holy is more important. To have God on their side, to be putting the trust in God is advocated. Even in the Old Testament where Israel had their armies, and God used Israel's armies in many cases to accomplish things, yet even in the Old Testament, God again and again and again wrote in their head, trust in God, don't trust

in armies.

In Psalm 20, verse 7, it says, Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. Now, chariots and horses, they had. That was military equipment back then.

They had chariots and horses, but David said, some trust in those things, we won't. We'll remember the name of the Lord our God, not trust in those things. In Psalm 33, verses 16 through 19, it says, There is no king saved by the multitude of an army.

That's a remarkable statement, isn't it? There is no king whose fortunes are guaranteed, who is saved by the multitude of his army. That's not all. It says, A mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

A horse, remember that's a military vehicle in those days, a horse is a vain thing for safety. Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him.

Upon them that hope in his mercy to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine. So, that's a striking teaching that a huge army doesn't guarantee any security. But those who trust in him, in his mercy, who please him, his eye is upon them to keep them alive and save them.

In Proverbs 21, 31, Proverbs 21, 31 says, The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord. You can have your horse all prepared, you can have your tanks like ducks in a row, but safety, if you're going to have it, is going to be not from them, but from the Lord. He is the one who determines those things.

In Isaiah 31, Isaiah is rebuking the people of Israel in his day or Judah, because they were threatened by the Assyrians, but instead of trusting in the Lord, they wanted to trust in Egypt. Egypt was the only other nation anywhere nearby that was as big and tough as Assyria, and so they wanted to send down money to pay off the Egyptians to come and to help them fight off the Assyrians instead of looking to the Lord. And the prophet Isaiah was continually saying, Forget about Egypt, get right with God and he'll take care of you.

Trust in God, don't trust in Egypt. Well, as part of that message, he said in Isaiah 31, verse 1 and verse 3, He says, Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, who stay on horses, that means they trust in horses, and trust in chariots because there are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord. Now, the Egyptians are men and not God, and their horses are flesh and not spirit.

When the Lord shall stretch out His hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is helped shall fall down, and they shall fall together. In other words, if you trust in Egypt

and God wants to judge you, both you and the people helping you will lose. Yeah, the Egyptians are mighty, but they are only men, they are not God.

Now, one other point about the theology of war in the Bible, and this from the human side, is that though Israel, the nation, sometimes fought in war with God's approval, they were to do so or not, only as directed by God's command. Now, that's very important. A lot of people say, well, of course we should fight in war.

After all, God told His people to fight in war all the time in the Old Testament. But wait a minute, not all the time. They marched when God told them to march, and they withheld when He told them to withhold, or at least they should have, because they weren't simply a nation that took its cues from the presence of danger, and said, well, there's danger out there, let's go get them.

Let's go fight them, let's defend ourselves. They were a nation that was taking its commands from God. He was their king.

And therefore, God would say, you go and kill those people, you go and defeat those people, you go and fight and I'll secure your victory over them. You won't even have to fight that time, I'll take care of these people. I'll send an angel in that case.

And God told them when to march and when not to march. And there were times when natural thinking would have told them to go, and they were told not to. One of the most remarkable instances of that is in Jeremiah's day, the Babylonians were actually besieging the city of Jerusalem, and they were destined to destroy it because it was under God's judgment.

And the people of Israel were fighting at the walls and planning their strategies to fight off the Babylonians. And Jeremiah was continually saying, don't fight the Babylonians. He was a pacifist.

He says, don't fight, surrender. He said repeatedly, God is going to be against you if you go out and fight these people. He'll knock the weapons out of your hand.

He'll defeat you, He'll crush you under the Babylonians. One thing He said to them, He says in Jeremiah 32, 5, He said, though you fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper, and as you won't win. And in Jeremiah 38, 2, Jeremiah said, Thus saith the Lord, He that remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by the pestilence.

But he that goes forth to the Chaldeans, he means surrender, shall live. For he shall have his life for a prey and shall live. He got thrown in jail for saying that, actually a dungeon.

Because he was saying to the armies, don't fight. Well, that wasn't, you know, the king doesn't like people telling the armies not to fight. And so, he got thrown in a dungeon for that.

But he was right. He had the Word of God. Interestingly, that God doesn't always tell the Israelites to go out and fight, even when there's an enemy at the gate.

Sometimes the answer is no. That's the thing. The wars in the Old Testament were right or wrong, insofar as God commanded them to fight or not.

Now, where is a nation today that takes its orders directly from God about these issues? I mean, is it not natural thinking that, of course, if an enemy comes, we have to defend ourselves? Well, that's how the Jews should have thought then about the Babylonians. But God was saying something different. No, don't defend yourself, surrender there.

This is God's judgment on you. How would we know the mind of God in a modern war? It's an interesting dilemma that we have to consider. There's some other examples in your notes I won't have time to give you right now.

I want to talk a little bit about something else now. I want to talk about what's called the Just War Theory. The Just War Theory arose in the pagan world.

Plato, the pagan philosopher, was the first person to suggest that some wars, good people should fight, and in some wars they shouldn't, depending on the issues of the war. Obviously, I think all Christians in America would agree that in World War II, even if it was right for some Christians to fight against Germany, it was not right for German Christians to fight against us, right? I mean, because they say, well, we were on the side of good, they were on the side of evil. Well, if we just take an ethic that whatever country you're in, you're a Christian, you should fight the wars of your nation, well, then the Germans were just as right to fight against us as we were right to fight against them.

But Plato recognized that ethical problem and he said, well, wait, there are certain wars that good people should participate in and certain wars they should not. The ones that they should are what he called just wars, wars that were just, wars that were righteous or good. Now, this idea came from Plato into the church after Constantine's conversion and it was brought in essentially around the year 400 AD by Augustine.

Augustine was the first Christian to actually create an ethic of a just war for Christians and he basically taught that there are some wars that Christians should be willing to fight in and others, of course, they shouldn't. Now, the idea is this, that capital punishment is the execution of actual criminals who deserve to die and therefore it is a just act. I agree, by the way.

But war isn't exactly like capital punishment. But if a war can be very much like capital punishment in terms of its exact justice, then that's good and you can fight in that. It's thought Augustine.

These ideas were later developed further by Thomas Aquinas and eventually it just became the basic dominant view of the church and still is the dominant view as near as I

can tell in evangelical circles. Next week, I'm going to give you 33 or 34 arguments advocated by evangelicals who believe in the just war theory. I'm going to tell you their arguments.

I'm going to tell you why I'm not convinced by them biblically. But some things you need to know about it. A just war had to fit certain criteria in order to be a just war instead of an unjust war.

The criteria were numerous. I've read as many as eight different criteria. I think there's even more that were in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas' writings.

But I'll give you four of them just for starters so you get an idea of what a just war is as opposed to another kind of war. First of all, a just war had one objective only and that would be to restore a just peace. A just war could not be a war of retaliation against some earlier wrong that was done against the nation.

It could not be a war of conquest or a war of territory acquisition. That would not be a just cause. Strictly speaking, a just war had to be a case where the war was fought only to restore a just peace.

Someone else had invaded. There was now conflict and the response should be, the just response should be to fend off the enemy's attacks, get the enemy out of there and restore a just peace but not try to go out and acquire real estate from that nation or punish them or whatever. A second criterion is that, of course, it had to be entirely defensive.

A just war had to be entirely defensive, not offensive at all because it follows. I mean, if you are attacked, then they said you have a just cause to defend yourself, defensive. But if you attack someone else in an offensive way, that's not okay.

That's aggression. That's not part of a just war. So a just war had to have its objectives to be merely the restoration of a responsible peace.

It had to be entirely defensive. Another thing about it is that the use of force in that war had to be proportionate and had to be limited to what is necessary to fend off the aggression. In other words, if your aggressor is coming with spears and swords and bows and arrows and you drop an atom bomb on them, that is not proportionate.

You could have stopped them doing less damage than that. The idea is you use only as much force as is necessary to end the conflict in a peaceful manner or favorably. Another very important aspect of a just war is that it had to be a war in which the immunity of non-combatants was guaranteed.

You see, one of the biggest differences between war, as it's usually thought, and capital punishment is that in capital punishment, a person is put to death who actually did

something worthy of death. He murdered somebody, raped somebody, kidnapped. In the Bible, there are several different crimes that were capital crimes.

A person does that crime, they deserve to die. The state's commanded to put them to death. That's justice.

But in a war, there are people who deserve to die and there are people who don't deserve to die. There are medics and there are children and women and other civilians and so forth, patients in hospitals. They die too.

The hospital gets bombed. Good guys and bad guys go up together. Now, if a war is going to be in any sense approximate like capital punishment in terms of being just, it has to guarantee that non-combatants are immune from any harm.

Now, these are just four. There are many other criteria for just war, but we can just say from those four, we don't have to go any further. One thing we can learn from these four is that there has never been a just war yet.

Now, if Christians want to argue that Christians, of course, should never fight in an unjust war, but they can fight if it's a just war. That's another way of saying that Christians shouldn't fight in any war that's ever been yet because there has never been a war that guaranteed non-combatant immunity. Now, World War II was a war in which I personally think America and the Allies had as close to a just cause in it as any war I know in history.

And yet, we have to acknowledge the Allies did not conduct themselves according to just war guidelines. To nuke Hiroshima. Now, listen, I'm not some kind of hippie.

I'm just talking about Christian ethics here. Nuking Hiroshima. Pragmatically, we could say, but think of how many lives were saved because the war ended because we nuked Hiroshima.

Think how many more people would have died in conventional warfare if we hadn't done that. Maybe. But those people would have been combatants.

When people are trying to kill someone and they get killed, that's justice. When people are just minding their own business in a Japanese city and they get vaporized, that's not justice. And by the way, it seems to me possible that the war could have ended just as quickly if we had nuked an uninhabited island.

Just tell the Japanese, 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, turn your binoculars over at that island over there and we'll show you what we can do. We wouldn't have had to kill any non-combatants. It was not a just action.

It was pragmatically good policy for winning a war, but it was not justice. The

firebombing of Dresden was not a just action. There are many things that our side did that Christians would have to condemn as war crimes judged by a just war criterion.

Am I glad that World War II turned out in our favor? I am glad that it did. I'm glad that Hitler isn't our Fuhrer today or anybody else's. But that doesn't mean that the end justifies the means.

The fact of the matter is, we won so we were able to try the war criminals at Nuremberg. If we had lost, there were some war crimes that our leaders would have had to face trial for. And justly so.

Because we always see ourselves as the good guys, it's always easy to represent our own side as being on the side of justice. And our participation is participation in a just war from our perspective. But that's not really the way it is.

Now, the most damaging thing I could say about the just war thing, the just war theory, although it's advocated by Christians, it's not advocated in the Bible. There's not one place in the Bible that such just war guidelines are suggested. The only guidelines for war given in the Bible are in Deuteronomy chapter 20.

And you know what God said to the Jews there about how they conduct warfare? He said, when you go to a city, if it's a Canaanite city, annihilate them all, men, women, children. Leave nothing that breathes. Now, if it's not a Canaanite city, then you can command them to surrender.

And if they surrender, they can be your slaves for life. If they don't surrender, you go in and wipe out every male and take the women for yourself. Now, whose just war guidelines does that sound like? There's not one scenario there where non-combatants are immune.

And you might say, well, didn't God give those instructions? He did. But you see, that's the difference between that and any war today. God gave the instructions.

And God is always just. If God says, you go wipe out all those people, I might say, why, Lord? He says, trust me. I know what's right.

Okay, if you said to do it, it's got to be right. It's got to be just. God knows what societies deserve to go out.

Sodom and Gomorrah. God took them out without military, but He took them out well. Every last man, woman, and child.

God knows when a society is ready to go and can't be tolerated anymore and when it's time to wipe them all out. But we don't. And until we get instructions directly from God, we can never know for sure that the war we're fighting were on God's side.

Who knows? Sometimes we might be fighting against God. The Jews sometimes did. Thinking they were on God's side because they didn't wait for instructions.

Now, that's the just war theory. Let me talk... Boy, we don't have much time. Let me talk about the ethics of forcible resistance for the Christian.

There's several things I want to talk about. I'll just not go into detail about it. I'll just give you the points in the Scriptures, I hope.

First of all, there's several general considerations that Christians... They're part of the Biblical teaching about Christians that are related to the idea of forcible resistance of evil. One, self-preservation and survival cannot be the Christian's chief priority. Now, that goes against everybody's grain.

Self-preservation is man's strongest instinct. But when you become a Christian, you die to self. You are crucified with Christ.

You have a new life and that life is found in obedience to Him. And He says, if anyone will seek to save his life, he will lose it. But whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.

Now, that sounds like a pretty big price tag for following Jesus. I guess we have to decide whether it's worth it or not. If it is, that's the price tag.

To prolong my life can no longer be my highest priority. Now, there's nothing wrong with prolonging my life if I don't have to disobey God in the act. But, there are times when the only way to prolong your life would be to do something God doesn't want you to do.

In which case, obedience to God is a higher priority than survival for the believer. Alright? Second point. Self-control in the face of aggression is greater, a greater achievement than military exploits.

Proverbs 16, 32 says, He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that rules his spirit than he that can take a city. It's a greater act of strength and might to remain unruffled, to remain loving toward your enemy and to remain calm than it is to be able to go out and, you know, tear enemies' heads off. To take a city.

There's an interesting quote I have from Lactantius, one of the church fathers who lived in the early 300's A.D. He was a church apologist and then he became an instructor to Constantine's son, once Constantine became a Christian. Lactantius said this, Why do contests, fights, and contentions arise among men? Is it not because impatience against injustice often excites great tempests? In what respect, then, does the wise and good man differ from the evil and foolish one? Is it not that he has unconquerable patience of which the foolish are destitute? Is it not that he knows how to govern himself and to mitigate his anger which those are unable to curb because they are without virtue? No,

it's to rule his spirit. He that rules his spirit is greater than a person who can take a city.

That in itself doesn't argue against taking a city, but it tells us that taking a city isn't the highest virtue. To rule your spirit, to remain calm and keep your wits about you and do what's right, even though you're under great provocation, is a higher virtue than to do military exploits. In Romans 12, 17-21, Paul sounds very much like Jesus.

In fact, he's summarizing the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount in some respects here. Romans 12, 17, he says, Recompense no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

If it is possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. He means by that give place to God's wrath.

If you avenge yourself, you leave no room for God to do it. When somebody does wrong to you, they deserve to suffer. They deserve to be punished.

Now the question is, are you going to do it? Are you going to not do it and leave it up to God to do it? That's what he's saying. Do not avenge yourselves, but give place to wrath. He means God's wrath.

And it's very clear when he says this, because he says, For it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, sayeth the Lord. Now, that's it. Someone's hurting you wrongly.

What are you supposed to do? Don't take vengeance into your own hands. Leave it to God. God himself has said, Vengeance is mine.

It's his prerogative, not yours. Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. And he repays justly.

He repays right. We sometimes may go a little overboard. Therefore, the counsel of the apostle is, Therefore, if your enemy hungers, feed him.

If he thirsts, give him drink. Suppose you were a Russian Christian on the Russian front when Hitler's troops were marching in and they were out of supplies. Now, we credit, you know, the fact that the supply lines of the Germans were cut off when they went up into Russia as one of the great things that happened to turn back the armies of Hitler.

And it was. Suppose you were a Russian Christian on the lines there and you saw your enemy hunger. Any instructions for you in the Bible? If your enemy hungers, give him food.

How does that work when you're a soldier? How does that work when you're trying to kill him? And the Bible says, feed him. There is a story in the Old Testament in 2 Kings 6. Elisha and his servant were in the city of Dothan and the Syrian armies came against

them and besieged. They actually wanted to kill Elisha.

And his servant came out on the wall and looked over the wall and saw all the Syrian armies out there and said, My Lord, Elisha, we're in trouble. They're here to get us. What are we going to do? And Elisha says, Lord, open his eyes.

And God opened that servant's eyes and he saw all over surrounding the Assyrians were these angelic armies. He saw chariots of fire covering the whole hillsides. He saw that God was in control of that situation.

And the armies came to the gate and Elisha struck them with blindness miraculously. And he says, Let me take you where you want to go. And he led them off to Samaria where the king of Israel was.

And he brought them in and then restored their sight to them. And they found themselves within the walls of Samaria, the capital city of their enemies. And the king of Israel said to Elisha, What shall I do? Shall I kill them? Elisha says, No, give them a meal and send them home.

Just give them food and send them back to their master. He did. And you know what? They left.

That was the end of the war. God's ways are strange. Different than man's, that's for sure.

If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he thirsts, give him drink. For in so doing, you shall heap coals of fire on his head that you accumulate God's wrath upon him.

If he doesn't get paid back by you, then a debt is being accrued. A debt of punishment that God will repay as God has said He would. In so doing, you shall heap coals of fire on his head.

Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good. Do not be overcome by evil. How's that? What is evil? Well, Lactantius again, the church father in year 304, he said, When provoked by injury, if the Christian returns violence to his assailant, he is defeated.

The view of the early Christians was, whether right or wrong, it sounds pretty right to me, that if somebody assails you, they are in the wrong, not you. If you fight back, you now are also in the wrong. You have been defeated.

Paul said, If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If your enemy is thirsty, give him drink. Don't be overcome by evil, beat it by being good.

Overcome evil with good. There is the temptation to do the same, to retaliate in kind when somebody does you harm. Paul says, Don't succumb to that.

You can overcome it by doing good. That is a biblical teaching. A third point, a general consideration, is to suffer and even to die with a clear conscience beats surviving without one.

It is more important to die with a clear conscience than to live without one. This is something that we need to think of more often than we do. Our instinct is to survive.

But at what cost to your conscience? If you have to do something that God doesn't want you to do in order to survive, and you do survive, you survive unrighteously. You survive without God's blessing. You survive against God's will.

But if you do the will of God, you leave your case in His hands. And then you either survive or not as He wishes. It is better to die with a good conscience toward God than to live without one.

Peter said that in 1 Peter 3, verses 13-18. He says, And who is He that will harm you if you be followers of that which is good? But, and if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you. And be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

For it is better, if the will of God be so, that you suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. Christ suffered, not so that we wouldn't, but so that He would set an example for us that we would too suffer justly rather than unjustly.

Another point of Scripture is that it is safe by obeying God dangerously to leave our fate in God's hands. When Paul said, do not avenge yourself, but give place to God's wrath, what he meant is this. Someone comes after you, you've got two choices.

You can take matters into your own hands, or you can put them in God's hands by not taking them into your own hands. Those are the two choices. Like A.W. Tozer said, he that defends himself will have himself for his defense and none other.

And that's what the Bible teaches. Peter said in 1 Peter 4,19, Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. You're suffering at the hands of people, you commit your case into God's hands.

How? By doing what's right. By doing the good thing. In doing what is right, you are committing your case into God's hands.

You're doing what God said and you leave the responsibility for the outcome with Him.

That's a safe place to be. It's much safer to be in the will of God in a dangerous environment than out of the will of God in what you perceive to be a safe environment.

The only safe place for anyone is in the will of God. And in obeying God, even obeying dangerously, you are safer because you are leaving your fate in God's hands by obeying Him. Another point is that we are commanded to love our neighbors and enemies as we love ourselves.

This obviously is related to the whole issue of resistance, although it doesn't answer all the questions for us. In Matthew 5, 43-48, Jesus said, You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies.

He doesn't leave it there. What else do you have to do? Bless them who curse you. Do good to them that hate you.

And pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. That's worth being.

But it has to be this way. For He maketh His Son to rise on the evil and the good. God is good to people who are bad as well as people who are good in some ways.

And sends the rain on the just and the unjust. For if you love only those who love you, what reward have you? Even the publicans do the same. If you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Even the publicans do so.

You have to be more like God, not like the publicans. What are the publicans like? They love people who love them. Okay, anyone can do that if they can do that.

What does God do? He loves people who love Him. And He even loves people who don't love Him. He sends His rain on the just, but He also sends it on the unjust.

That's good. That's good for their crops. He caused the sun to rise on the evil and on the good.

Be like Him. Be children of your Father. Love your enemies.

Do good to those who do bad to you. This is the teaching of Scripture, of Jesus. Now, whether this applies to war or not is debatable.

I think it does, but some Christians say it doesn't. They say, Jesus is just talking about personal enemies, you know, like neighbors who have a grudge against you. He's not talking about international conflicts.

That would be something to be considered separately. Another point. If love for neighbors should require resistance of a violent enemy, and I think sometimes it may,

okay, although I have a pacifist position largely about war, I believe there are times when love for my neighbor may require that I resist a violent crime in progress.

Right? Now, if that is so, it need not necessarily involve the use of deadly force. If I see a crime in progress and I've got a gun on me, it doesn't mean I have to blow the guy away. There may be some other way to stop the crime.

There may be some other way to resolve the conflict without taking a man's life. That's all I'm saying. Now, there may not be.

But if there is, we need to make sure we're not too trigger happy and too eager to blow somebody away because we have some small justification of the fact that he's doing a bad thing. Not all bad things are crimes worthy of death. And Jesus, as I said, came to give us a culture of life.

We should be very loath to even consider taking a human life. If there is a time when it's necessary to do so, and that we will consider separately, if it is necessary to take a human life, it should be something we are loath to do and would rather do almost anything short of that, if possible, to attain righteous results. Jesus was passing through Samaria on His way to Jerusalem.

In Luke chapter 9, it says He sent some messengers ahead of Him to see if He could arrange for some lodging in Samaria. But the people of Samaria didn't accept Him because He was on His way to Jerusalem. They didn't want to take Him in.

It says in verse 54 of Luke 9, when the disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? Even as Elias did? Here, they were ready to kill these people. What have they done? Some capital crime? No, they just weren't interested in being hospitable to Jesus and the disciples. Even these disciples were a little bit too trigger happy.

Now, they didn't have guns, but they had Jesus and they had miraculous power. And they thought, well, Elijah did this. Maybe we could pull this off.

Shall we call fire out of heaven to come down and consume these people like Elijah did? But check Jesus out here. He turned and rebuked them and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

Very important statement of Jesus' purpose. He did not come to destroy men's lives even though we deserved it. He did not come to condemn the world.

The world was already condemned. The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. He rebuked his disciples at the thought that they would do that.

Now, of course, we have to admit their decision to call fire down was disproportionate punishment to the crime. I mean, inhospitality is not necessarily something for which people should be executed. And these disciples definitely deserved rebuke in this matter.

Now, if the crime had been something more of a capital nature, we can only speculate what Jesus might have said, but he did point this out. He didn't come here trigger happy. He came here to save people, not to kill people.

The Christian is on Christ's errand. If the use of deadly force is ever justified, it is only when human life is apparently in danger. There is a case given in Exodus 22, verses 2 and 3, which would suggest that if a criminal is breaking into a man's house at night, that man, as the head of his home, has every right to resist the criminal, even if the man dies.

Now, the assumption is that the man is a thief, but you don't know what he is coming to do. Who knows? The family is in their sleep. You can't second guess this guy.

If the guy gets killed by you, when he is breaking into your house, that's his own tough luck. He should have stayed out. And it says that.

In Exodus chapter 22, verses 2 and 3, if a thief is found breaking in and he is struck so that he dies, there should be no guilt of his bloodshed. It's the person who killed him. The homeowner is not held responsible for killing him.

The guy was in his house. Who knows what he was up to? But it says, if the sun has risen on him, there shall be guilt for his bloodshed. He should make full restitution.

Now, what it means is this. A man breaks into the house at night. Homeowner is awakened from his sleep.

He doesn't know what's going on. He grabs something and swings. The guy is killed.

Well, sun comes up and finds out, oh, the guy is dead. Well, you know, the guy broke into my house. I had to protect my family.

For all I knew, my family was in danger. But if you wait until the next day, if the thief gets off with the goods and you catch up with him the next day when the sun has come up, you can't kill him then. He hasn't done a capital crime.

He's got your money. He has to give it back with restitution. He doesn't deserve to die.

You don't kill people when they do something less than capital crimes. If there is ever any legitimate use of deadly force, if it's ever justified, it's only when human life is apparently endangered. Not merely, and listen to me, you won't like this, not merely when property or freedoms are endangered.

Now, do I love my freedoms? Do I appreciate my property? Very much. I have more property today than I ever thought I would ever have. It is worth more than I ever thought my assets would ever be worth in my lifetime.

I own them free and clear. If someone came and said, we're taking this, would I be tempted to pull out my gun? If they said, we're taking your freedom away, would I be tempted to pull out my gun? Of course I'd be tempted to do so. But biblically, killing people to defend material things or abstractions like my freedoms simply is not one of the things that is, I think, biblically legitimate.

Let me turn you to some scripture on this. In Hebrews chapter 10, Hebrews 10, verse 32 through 34, the writer is reminding his readers who are somewhat backslidden of their earlier better days as better Christians than they were now. And he says in Hebrews 10, 32, But recall the former days in which after you were illuminated, you endured great struggle with sufferings, partly while you were made a spectacle, both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated.

For you had compassion on me and my chains and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. So, he says you were better Christians at one time.

Remember back then when people took your goods from you and you joyfully endured it because you knew you had better stuff in heaven anyway? Is that where we're at? That's where Christians are supposed to be at. Now, is there something distinctive about being Christian that's different than being non-Christian? You bet there is. We can't just take general morality and say I'm a Christian now, I'll subscribe to general morality.

No, we subscribe to the specific morality taught by Jesus Christ. And that is at great expense to our egos, great expense to ourselves. It may cost us our lives.

It cost many Christians their lives to obey Jesus Christ. It cost Him His life to obey His Father. And it may cost us ours.

It might cost us less than our lives. It might cost us our property. It may cost us going to jail.

Many Christians, including the apostles, went to jail for doing the right thing. That's taking away your freedom. They weren't even guilty of anything.

But they wouldn't fight. And even when Peter was in jail in Acts 12, there were thousands and thousands of Christians in Jerusalem where he was jailed. They could have stormed the prison and gotten him out.

He was going to be put to death the next day. Do you think if Billy Graham was arrested

by... if Clinton sent troops to Billy Graham's house and just yanked him out and put him in prison and planned to execute him tomorrow for no reason, no due process, no trial, no crime even. He wasn't even accused of anything.

News got out through the email networks. Billy Graham is going to be executed by President Clinton tomorrow. We need to storm Washington, D.C. Don't you think the Christians march out there with their guns to defend Billy Graham? Here the early church has a similar situation.

Peter's in jail. He's going to be put to death the next day. You know what they're doing? What are the Christians doing? They're praying all night long.

And you know what happened? God sent an angel. And the angel let Peter out. They were not like us.

We need to be more like them because they were more like Jesus. That is something we need to get used to. Now, I've already run over time.

But since I have, I'm going to keep going to reach a more logical stopping point. Not much more. I just have to reach a more logical stopping point here.

Okay? Some specific scenarios. What should a Christian do in this scenario, in that scenario when it comes to non-resistance or resistance? First scenario, when there is no mortal danger. Okay? Let's take the lightest to start with.

There's no mortal danger. Someone wants my wallet. Yeah, he wouldn't want it if he knew what was in there because there's not much.

But let's just say my life, I have no reason to believe my life is in danger. Now, of course, the problem with this is many times when a guy wants your wallet, he's also armed and you might have reason to believe your life is in danger. But there are situations where you clearly are being victimized but there's no reason to believe your life is in danger.

What then? Well, Jesus speaks, I think, directly to those cases in Matthew 5, 38-42. You've heard that it's been said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you that you resist not the evil man.

But whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. If any man will sue thee at the law and take away your coat, give him your cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile with him, go with him too.

Give to him that asketh thee. And from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away. Now, to really implement these rules as practices seems kind of impractical, doesn't it? Some people say, well, Jesus was exaggerating.

That's a hyperbole. He didn't really expect to do those things. That'd be more convincing

if we didn't have the testimony of Scripture that Jesus did these very things and so did the apostles.

In other words, they didn't think they were impractical. They thought that's what Jesus said to do and Jesus Himself modeled it and told us to walk in His steps. Now, He does not describe a lethal, deadly, life-threatening situation.

Even when someone strikes you on the right cheek, assuming most people are right-handed, if they strike you on the right cheek, they must be using the back of their right hand. In other words, they're not striking you with the force to knock you out, but they're insulting you. They're slapping you across the face to get you riled up.

Absorb the insult. Don't react. If they slap you... Slap is the right concept here because He specifically has the right cheek.

Now, my right cheek, when I'm facing you, is facing your left hand. If you wanted to really hit me and do me harm, if you're right-handed, you're going to hit me on the left cheek. In order to hit me on the right cheek, you have to use the back of your hand.

And so, the idea here is not a lethal confrontation. This situation where somebody is insulting you, somebody is taking advantage of you, somebody is doing you wrong, they're violating your rights, your dignity or whatever, what are you supposed to do? No retaliation. There is one thing you can do.

Matthew 10, 23, Jesus said, But when they persecute you in this city, flee to another. Running away is not forbidden. That might be a form of resistance, but it's not unkind resistance.

The fact is, Jesus said, If they persecute you, run away. Now, some people would be too macho for that. I don't run away from anybody.

I can handle this guy, this wimp. I'm a black belt. Well, maybe you are.

But it's more apparently pleasing to God for you to flee the confrontation than to hurt the person who is trying to take stuff from you. Remember, loving your enemy is what this is all about. Now, what about scenario two? When you are in mortal danger, where actually if you do nothing, you might die.

What then? Well, non-resistance appears to be the same ethic in this case in the Bible. Although running away is still an option. Paul did.

When Paul was in Damascus, there were people waiting at the gate to kill him. He fled out a window in a wall, in a basket. Got away.

He fled many times. Jesus even did this from time to time. When they started plotting against him, he'd start sneaking around at night and keeping a low profile To avoid

people who want to kill you is quite justifiable.

And to run away is quite justifiable. But what if there is no way to get away? What then? Should you defend yourself violently? Well, natural ethics would certainly say yes. But what does the Bible say? In James 5, 6 is rebuking certain corrupt rich people and he says to them, Ye have condemned and killed the righteous, and he does not resist you.

Now, this righteous person is being condemned and killed unjustly. He does not resist. I have a whole bunch of quotes from the church fathers.

They all said the same thing. They do not resist when they're hauled off to court. They don't resist when they're on trial for the life.

And that's why a lot of them were fed to the lions and so forth. I mean, there were times when there were enough Christians in Rome, they could have waged a war for their own protection. They just didn't believe that was legitimate.

They just didn't believe that Jesus gave them permission to do that. And these verses sound like they were right. In 1 Peter 2, verses 21 through 23, it says, For even hereunto you were called, because Christ also suffered for us.

How did He suffer? He died. He also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow His steps. That means do what He did.

Who did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, who when He was reviled, He did not revile again. When He suffered, He didn't even threaten. But He committed Himself to Him that judges righteously.

Just like we're told to do in 1 Peter 4, verse 19. If you suffer according to the will of God, commit yourselves to God by doing what's good. Jesus did that.

He suffered, but He didn't threaten. He didn't defend Himself. He died.

Now, some people say, well, He died because He was a special case. He had to die for our sins, of course. None of us have to die for each other's sins.

Well, it doesn't say He died as a special case. It says He died setting us an example that we would follow in the same way. The specific suffering Jesus went through is presented as an example for us to follow and to respond as He did in the face of that kind of danger.

Remember, I'm assuming you're all Christians here. I don't know everyone here. If you're not a Christian, this simply does not make sense.

And if you are a Christian, you still might not have thought this through enough to think that it makes sense. But, from the standpoint of Christianity, this makes perfect sense.

You, if you are saved, can afford to die.

In fact, you know what? You're going to. You're going to die. Would you rather die a protracted death of cancer when you're 70 and go to heaven then? Or would you rather die a violent and sudden death without obeying God on the mission field or obeying God in some other dangerous situation and go to heaven then? Do you think when you go to heaven, you'll have any regrets that you got there when you were 40 years old instead of when you were 70 years old? Do you think when you're living forever and ever and ever and ever, that 30 years that got cut off the end of the earth, you'll say, Boy, I sure miss that.

Boy, I wish I had 30 more years. Do you think 30 years will even be anything you'd even notice? Not at all. You're going to die.

The Bible tells us this. It's a point on the man wants to die. The most important thing is that you die faithful and that you die in the will of God.

And if God says, Here it is. They're coming for you. This is the time.

This is my time for you. Do what I said to do and you'll die faithful. That's what the apostles did.

That's what Jesus did. That's what Christians did without exception for 300 years after Christ until they became militarized in the days of Constantine. Christians always believed that what Jesus did is what we should do.

And so when the danger is mortal, there still is an argument for either running away or if God doesn't give you that option, being a witness in your death. I'd much rather be a witness in my death than just live to be 80, 90 years old and then not be a witness in my death. I'm going to die anyway.

I'd rather die a witness. I'd rather die a martyr if that's the option God gives me. Now, one other scenario.

What about when others are in mortal danger? What is your responsibility then? Suppose it's not you or maybe not just you that are in danger, but there's other people, innocent people in mortal danger. Your family. When thugs break into the house and they're there to pillage and rape and kill.

Now, you might say, well, I'm ready to go to heaven. I'll just lay down my life. But wait a minute.

What if you're the head of the household and you have responsibility for the safety of wife and children and other innocent parties? What then? Well, you want to know something? That exact scenario is not specifically addressed in any of the ethical

teachings of Scripture. I think we can deduce some things. We do know this, that Jesus was in a similar situation in the Garden of Gethsemane because He and His disciples with Him were in danger of being arrested and taken off and killed.

He didn't want them to die. He was willing to die, but He didn't want them to. What did He say? He said to the people who were coming, Who are you seeking? They said, Jesus of Nazareth.

He says, I'm He. They fell over. They got up again.

He said, Who are you seeking? They said, Jesus of Nazareth. He said, I told you, I'm He. If it's me you want, let these others go.

And basically what He did is He deflected all of the attack on Himself. Now, that's not always possible in every scenario. The bad guys might just say, Sure, we'll take you out and then we'll take them.

There may be times when people for whom you are responsible before God are in danger and you are the one who's in a position to help them. Should you? I would say, yes. The question, though, of whether you need to use deadly force is another question.

There are times when even deadly force could probably be justified. But those times, it seems to me, are very few. If you are in the position to kill a criminal, whatever it is that puts you in that position would in most cases put you in a position to stop him short of killing him.

You got a gun? You can disable him. You got a baseball bat? You're stronger than he is? There's a lot of things that can be done to rescue innocent people whose lives are in danger short of killing someone. Now, I'll tell you my own thoughts because the Bible doesn't say contrary.

The Bible doesn't say anything about this. When Jesus told us about non-resistance, He always gave scenarios where you are the one in trouble. He never gave a scenario where someone else is in trouble.

So, Jesus' teachings on non-resistance are never in the Bible applied to the situation where you're responsible for someone else's safety and they're in trouble. I believe when Jesus said to love your enemy, it did not cancel out His general instruction to love your neighbor. And the Bible does not say you have to love the enemy more than you love the innocent.

As a matter of fact, Christians are to be passionate for justice as well as mercy. And when there's a bad guy and a good guy, and you're in the position to decide which one is going to prevail, and you're the one that God's put there, in my judgment, I think intervention is called for. As I said, I think we should be very loath and slow to use deadly

force.

But I even think that if a person is going to kill innocent people, that the use of deadly force is justifiable. Not very desirable, but justifiable if that's the only way out. Now, I could be wrong, but I'll tell you how I look at it.

If my children were about to be murdered, and I was standing there somewhere where the bad guy didn't know, and I had the gun, and let's say there's nothing I could do to stop him except to kill him. There's just no way. I'm not that good a shot.

I can't guarantee I'm going to hit him in a non-vital spot. I either shoot or I don't shoot. The ball is in my court now.

I decide by my action or inaction whether the good guy is going to live or the bad guy is going to live. Or to put it another way, whether the good guy is going to die or the bad guy is going to die. I don't like anyone to die, but I'd rather take my chances taking out the bad guy.

If I later decided wrong, at least I'll know maybe I should have done something else, but at least the guy that got killed deserved it. I'd rather be in that side of that dilemma than to say, I just watched the good guys die, and now I think I was wrong. Whatever I do, I might have regrets later.

I'd rather have regrets having killed a bad guy than have regrets having brought the death of good guys. That's where I'm at. Now somebody says, but wait, if the good guys are Christians, they can die too just like you can.

They can go to heaven. The bad guy can't. Maybe, but you can't always guarantee that the good guys are Christians.

The fact is there are times where we just don't know what God knows about people's eternal states and we have to just take the side of justice. We just have to take the side of righteousness it seems to me. Now I could be wrong about that.

I don't claim to be all knowing about this, but that is the position that I take simply reflecting on the fact that the Bible does not lay out that exact scenario for us anywhere. We do have of course that case in Exodus which although we're not under the law, the law does lay out God's concept of justice where the thief breaks into the house, the homeowner kills the thief, protects the family, and there's no guilt on his hands for doing so. It sounds to me like that's kind of close to the scenario we're talking about.

I really think though that there's very few scenarios I can imagine where I would be in a position where I could kill someone, but I couldn't just wound them. It seems to me like if I could kill them I could wound them or do some other thing. And of course in many cases brandishing a weapon is enough to get the guy to leave especially if he doesn't

have a weapon of a similar class.

But there's all kinds of scenarios I don't claim to give a one size fits all, rule about this. The Christian has to be concerned about justice. The Christian has to be concerned about the cause of the innocent.

The Christian has to be concerned about not being disproportionate in the judgment he meets out against a criminal. But there are times when it seems to me, and I say this not as an oracle of God but as simply one giving an opinion, not having a direct command from Scripture. I think it seems to me that there are times when even the use of deadly force, if that's all that's available, can be legitimate in the protection of innocent parties.

Now some might say, Ah, well you've just now allowed war because if invading armies are coming in and they're going to kill your family and your neighbors then shouldn't you resist? That's a very good point. But I don't have time to answer it in detail right now. All I will say is this.

When someone's breaking into my house I know who the bad guy is for sure. It's easier for me to use proportionate force in a small scale confrontation. It's easier for me to know who the innocent parties are.

In a national conflict I'm not really sure whose side God's on. God might be wanting to judge us. After all, don't Christians continually say our nation's ripe for judgment? Isn't it almost a mantra that if God doesn't judge America He's going to have to resurrect Sodom and Gomorrah and apologize? Haven't we acknowledged again and again that we're worthy of judgment but let someone try to bring it on us and say wait a minute now.

I'm not so serious about this. War is a slightly different issue than just a matter of stopping crimes in progress it seems to me. But there may be some parallel ideas.

Well, I want to just say well, I'm going to save the rest. I'm going to save the rest for next time because I've run way over time and there's quite a bit more I wanted to say but I'm going to have to spill over into something more next time anyway so we'll close here.