

**Ecclesiastes 3: 8b; “A Time of War and Peace”; Sermon # 18 in the series –
“Remember Your Creator”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall, on
October 9th, 2016, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

In the last sermon that I preached to you from verse 8, I opened up the idea that there is a time and a place for love and hate. There is a time in the experience of all men, when they hate the Almighty and are at enmity with Him. And there is a time in the experience of some men, God’s chosen people, when they come to know and love God; when they come to Christ. If a person is never converted to Christ, the time their hatred is forevermore. They may indeed be moral and decent people in the eyes of men. They may not think of themselves as God-haters. They may have done much for other people, and may have shown other people human kindness in a number of ways, but in the mind of God; He knows that they really hate Him because they refuse to believe in His way of salvation which He has provided through Jesus Christ our Lord. They do not believe God’s testimony; that faith in the Lord Jesus is the only way to really know God and to have eternal life. They may be very religious, but they refuse to love Him and serve Him on His terms. They do not want God evaluating them or judging them. They want to judge themselves and justify themselves as being righteous because of the good things that they have done. This is really a form of hating God when we do not want to be instructed by Him; when, instead, we want to instruct Him.

The last time that we were together, we saw that within the heart of a true Christian there exists, or should exist, a righteous hatred and love, which are co-existing there at the same time. The Christian who is taught by God has a perfect hatred of God’s enemies and in that hatred of those who are wicked, he has no desire for personal revenge or sinful anger and indignation. He actually has a love for God’s enemies and his. His desire is that God would save them from their sins rather than destroy them. And because he thinks this way, by the grace of God he is able to love at the right time and in the right way. And he is able to hate in the right time and in the right way. Now this afternoon I want to take our study one level further to bring before you the subject of war and peace between nations. We have seen that it is not right to war against the brethren or to take personal revenge upon our enemies, but what about going to war for your country? Is there such a thing as a righteous war? Well let’s look at this subject by looking at a few verses and I think that, God giving us help, we will be able to draw the right conclusions.

1st – I would like to show you that God in the Old Testament commanded times of war for the nation of Israel.

God commanded the nation of Israel to go to war at times because He would have them rid themselves of all their enemies who would lead them astray to idols. This is based upon what He Himself wars against. Turn with me to Exodus 15, verse 1. The Lord has just brought the people up out of Egypt and personally delivered them from their bondage in Egypt by destroying the troops of Pharaoh in the Red Sea. “Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: ‘I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!’ ‘The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!’ ‘The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.’ ‘The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name.’ ‘Pharaoh’s chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.’”

Now look over at Deuteronomy Chapter 4, verse 32. Moses is warning Israel against idolatry in the verses before this, and now He adds to this, a further explanation. “For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether any great thing like this has happened, or anything like it has been heard.” “Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live?” “Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the mist of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt

before your eyes?” “To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord Himself is God; there is none other besides Him.” God Himself, you see, waged war against Egypt, taking Israel out from the midst of Egypt, and delivering them to serve Himself.

Now turn over to Deuteronomy 7, verses 16-19. After telling Israel that He had not set His love upon them as a nation because they were more in number than the other peoples; but because He would keep the oath which He swore to their fathers, He then brought them out with a mighty hand and redeemed them from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. In verse 16 He says to them: “And you shall destroy all the peoples whom the Lord your God delivers over to you; your eye shall have no pity on them; nor shall you serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you.” “If you should say in your heart, ‘These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?’” “You shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, by which the Lord your God brought you out.” “So shall the Lord your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.” So you see that Israel was commanded to war with these nations. They were to dispossess them, and thus have the promised land of Canaan. But let us remember that this was because in Old Testament times, they were the only nation that God had chosen, out of all the nations on the face of the earth, to give them the privilege of knowing Him. This accounts for the commandment of war with the nations in the land. They were physically to war against them so that they would not fall into the worship of the false gods of those peoples.

But 2nd – What is the difference between New Testament and Old Testament warfare?

Well, let us remember once again, that there is no one nation on the face of the earth; now that God has set His love upon them, to have them to be His exclusive people. This is because of what Jesus Christ has brought about through His death on the cross. Instead, He has set His general love upon all the nations of the world in the gospel. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” And With this as His purpose He set His Eternal Electing love upon people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. Turn with me over to Ephesians chapter 2, verse 11. “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh – who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands – at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”

So you see, the difference between Old and New is, that there is still only one body of God’s people, but now it is composed of Jews and Gentiles. And so the enmity between them ought to cease entirely, when we think of Christ’s Church. There is an inclusion of all kinds of people worldwide into the Church; people who believe the gospel, and they are brought into Christ’s Universal Church body, and together they are the ones who make up His one people. Christ has fulfilled the Law and its ceremonial and moral requirements; filling it up with His righteousness. He has established peace between God and man, and between Jew and Gentile. In Christ they are reconciled them to God, and to each other. Therefore, there is no commandment from God that one nation ought to fight another nation.

Jesus is the Prince of peace. And He is the ruler of the Nations. And He died to bring about an end to wars altogether, in our times, because of the power of the gospel, there shall be peace between man and man as well as between God and man. Nothing shall be impossible for the Lord. Psalm 46, verses 7-11. “The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” “Come

behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth.” “He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.” “Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” And also Isaiah chapter 2. Speaking of the time that is coming, the Millennium of Chapter 20, the prophet here says in verse 2, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.” Then look at verse 4. “He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” You see, within this present evil age, there is a time for war and a time for peace.

Over the course of the two thousand years of Church history there have been many wars, and many Christians question whether there can ever be a time like I just read to about in the previous verses. But God knows how and when to accomplish this great thing, and He will do it when He is pleased to stretch forth His power. There will be wars in various places in the world until that appointed comes. And when that time comes, then will come the fulfillment of what it says in Psalm 102, verse 13: “You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes the set time has come.” “For your servants take pleasure in her stones, and show favor to her dust.” “So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth Your glory.” World peace will only come when the Holy Spirit is poured out in a greater sense than we have seen before. It will only come when the gospel is preached with power in a great sense than it presently is; when it is received on a much wider scale among the nations than it has before. But this too, shall happen someday according to many promises in the Scriptures.

And then 3rd – When should a nation go to war now, in New Testament times and who should participate?

I believe there is such a thing as a righteous war; and a time for it. It is when the country that you live in, is being attacked unrighteously by another country. And to go one step further, war is also legitimate if there can be consensus among the leadership and people of that nation that it has become necessary to protect other nations who are being attacked unrighteously. The principles of what is righteous and unrighteous must be determined by the what the Bible teaches. Although there is nothing specifically given to us in the New Testament concerning a nation going to war, or under what circumstances a nation should go to war, there are principles from the Old Testament which I believe still apply to our New Testament times.

Turn over to Deuteronomy 20, verse 3. “When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.” “So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people.” “And he shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies; do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.’” “Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying: ‘What man is there who has built a new house and has not dedicated it?’” “Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it.” “And what man is there who has planted a vineyard and has not yet eaten of it.” “Let him also go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it.” “And what man is there who is betrothed to a woman and has not yet married her?” “Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man marry her.” “Then the officers shall speak further to the people, and say, ‘What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted?’” “Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.” “And so it shall be when the officers have finished speaking to the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.”

I hope that you can see that a righteous war can only be fought from strong and righteous principles; especially the principle of faith. The people going to war must be able to say to themselves and to others: “I am doing this because it is the right thing to do”. “This is what God

would have me to do to defend and protect my country, or someone else's country, by my following my nation's leaders lead." Are the leaders and the people praying about what it will mean to go to war? If they are praying, and seeking the wisdom and discernment which come from God, God will be with the people who have these kind of convictions, and He will help them then, to do what is right even if they lose the war for reasons which only God knows. Concerning those who should go to war, these principles of verses 3-9 are good principles even if some of them are not currently used by the country we are now living in. They relate to considerations of fear and marital love, the dedication of a man's house, and a farmer harvesting his crops. You can see here that there are legitimate reasons which are given for certain individuals not going to war. I believe that given the right set of circumstances that these principles can legitimately be applied to the subject of war in New Testament times as well.

The final principle that is important to bring to the table, in consideration of whether a country ought to go to war, is whether they have really checked to see if the other country wants peace. Verse 10 says, "When you go near a city to fight against it, (in our case; fighting against it for Biblically righteous reasons) then proclaim an offer of peace to it." "And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people who found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you." "Now if the city will not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it." The leaders of a nation, and the people themselves, must ask themselves the question of whether they really are peacemakers. The Lord calls us to be peacemakers on the level of our relationships with individual people. But He also calls us to it also on the level of the relationships between nations.

To conclude; war is not wrong when it is waged righteously. The nation who wages it, should not wage wars of aggression to take over other countries unless they have been attacked by that country. There should be consensus of agreement among the leaders and the people that this a righteous war that they intend to engage in. There is now a new and more difficult set of considerations which has come up in our day with terrorists, hostile to our country, being harbored by other countries. In all these cases where there are questions raised about whether entering in to a war is right, I believe that it will be right for our President to wait to attack a country suspected of harboring terrorists hostile to our government or our nation, until it can be conclusively be proven to the people that that government is harboring them and will not take steps to deal with them or hand them over. It is always a good thing to wait in such cases unless it can be conclusively proven that to do so would be fatal to the defense of our land and our people; a case such as what happened on 9/11/2001. Retaliation or fast military action against countries suspected of having weapons of mass destruction may lead to greater problems and more wars, and the temptation should be resisted. Facts can be assessed and righteous plans made, but suspicion is not grounds for war. Let us attempt, as a country, to promote peace by not being easily provoked as a nation. But let us not be afraid to wage war when tyrants and despotic governments use their power to wage war against us.