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War, Violence and The Christian, Pt 4

Selected Passages

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: In light of the massive amount of violence occurring in Israel and the Gaza Strip, we take time to consider the source and causes of war and how does a Christian begin to approach a very complicated subject. Many opinions flow on this subject but not a lot of biblical thinking. We seek to begin to remedy this.

I. Introduction.

A. We continue with this series on the nature of war, violence and the Christian.

B. Summary of what we know:

1. War is due to sin in this age.
2. War is often driven by envy and selfishness.
3. Last Sunday I gave some biblical observations that should help us as we think through the various proposals about war for which Christians have argued:
 - a. Inevitable.
 - b. Violent and destructive.
 - c. Long lasting.
 - d. Harms non-combatants.

C. When you look at the various ways that Christians have approached war over the last 2000 years you will find two basic positions will arise: *Activist and Pacifist.*

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- D. It is important to understand that we are dealing with the individual more than the nation.
 - 1. Unless you are placed in a situation of high leadership in a nation you do not possess the authority to declare war
 - 2. But how you choose to engage that decision is something only you can make.
 - 3. What you might personally choose has consequences and **you must be willing to accept them without complaint.**
- E. As we look at these positions what I want you to note is that each of them are trying to develop a **biblical** position on violence and war. This is important to remember as you listen and consider each position.

II. How Christians approach the issue of war.

- A. Non-Resistance:
 - 1. Non-resistance argues that the Christian should not be involved in any activity that involves violence against his fellow man. He may serve in the military but not in some capacity that would bring violence upon others nor be involved tangentially with that violence.
 - 2. This is not a popular position but it is one to which you should give careful thought.
 - a. It is overtly commanded by Jesus (Matthew 5:39).
 - b. It is commanded by the Apostles:
 - (1) Romans 12:17-19.
 - (2) 1 Peter 3:9.
 - (3) 1 Thessalonians 5:15.
 - c. The Christian does not belong to this kingdom.
 - (1) “Do not be conformed to this world [age]. . .” (Romans 12:2).
 - (2) John 18:36.

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- d. The method Christ calls us to use is not of this age (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).
3. On the basis of passages like these the decision by Christian pacifists is that violence is always forbidden for a Christian.
4. Key passages examined:
 - a. Matthew 5:38-48.
 - (1) There are many things going on in the whole message in chapters 5-7 but the driving question for us is when and how are these things to be practiced?
 - (2) The passage, if taken to be absolute in all circumstances, then must be applied in the same way for the rest of the message. You cannot save any money as He forbids laying up any treasure on this earth in chapter 6.
 - (3) To whom is this message given? vs 1 shows the context is for the disciples.

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b. John 18:36.

- (1) The fact that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world is not talking about this globe, this rock hurtling through space.
- (2) He is saying that His kingdom is not of this age. It is a different age that is yet to come.
- (3) Note well the "So that" or "that" in your bible. This is speaking of purpose. So with that in mind it is rather easy to understand the meaning of this passage.

5. The essence of the argument is that any form of resistance, including violence is forbidden in all situations for the Christian. However, this also bleeds over into society so that national defense should be at the absolute minimum.

6. Much of what is argued is fine if you wish to speak about a Christian on his own. If a believer is convinced that there are no exceptions to Jesus' commands to not resist him who is evil, then they should follow their conscience.

a. But they must also be willing to accept fully the consequences.

b. They should be consistent as well by not expecting the authorities to protect them as this merely shifts the need for violence off to the one who is not under those convictions. In other words, if I cannot resist a man seeking to harm my wife but I expect a police officer to do whatever is necessary to prevent harm to my wife, I am acting hypocritically.

B. Pacifism:

1. The pacifist argues for a more active position even though it is called Pacifism. He is actively seeking to create peace wherever he finds himself. He would have no relationship with any arm of the government that would be involved in doing violence.

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2. In pacifism there is the goal and standard of peace. It is not merely the absence of war or violence, that is only seeing it in the negative. The positive side is a state of actively seeking peace. To be a peacemaker.
3. Much like non-resistance, the pacifist sees a strong distinction between the church and state, though like all things there will be exceptions to that rule. Pacifism is not something we expect the people of this age or the governments to accept. As a result the pacifist tends to see that the government should be left to do what it deems best and let the church be free to work within society to promote peace.
4. So while the government is ordained by God it is by not means the authority that a Christian is truly under.
5. Many of the same passages will be used by the Pacifist that are used by the Non-Resistance position.
 - a. This is important to note because it shows you how different applications can be made from the same passages.
 - b. In reality this is also another example of how important your hermeneutic is to life. So often we do not consider what a passage actually means before we try to apply it to ourselves. The result becomes one where everyone claims a verse to justify their choice but no one has actually ever understood the meaning of a verse first.
 - c. There is the idea in Pacifism that we do not belong to this age and therefore we should be not participating in the fruits of sin, one of which is war or violence. The difference is that we should be seeking to being a blessing of peace at the same time.
 - d. One other key position is that the believer belongs to a different kingdom and should limit their interactions with the kingdoms of this sinful age.
 - (1) In Colossians 1:13 we read, *“for He delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”*

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- (2) Again this is usually applied without first giving the meaning. The context makes it clear Paul is referring to the individual believers and the blessings that come from faith in Jesus Christ.
- (3) In vs 12 we are told to be a people giving thanks to the Father in heaven. Why? Because we share in the inheritance awaiting us along with all the other saints.
- (4) Then, in vs 13 the “for” gives us examples. One is that we no longer are part of this fallen age and the attendant consequences of God’s wrath upon it.
- (5) So vs 14 speaks then of our redemption, the purchase of freedom out of our enslavement to sin and then the forgiveness of sin itself.
- (6) But what is not discussed is how you are to live in this fallen age as a citizen. The application of pacifism is fine, if that is your personal conviction in light of the passage. But it is NOT what the passage is actually saying, it is merely one of many possible applications you may conclude.
- (7) So you will find most pacifists saying that if you work for the government you must do it only in those areas where you are not expected to be violent. So armed combatants as well as law enforcement do not belong to the believer.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Some will say, “What about Israel? They were God’s people and they did much war.” There are two common responses from the Non-Resistance or the Pacifist camps:
 1. Some hold to a theological position called Dispensationalism which is the position of the leadership of this church
 - a. For them the answer is very simple—the Church and Israel are not the same. They are distinct groups of God’s people.
 - b. They were a physical nation while the Church is a holy/spiritual nation. *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”* (1 Peter 2:9).

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2. What about other statements of Christ that seem to contradict the pacifist's position?
 - a. *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword"* (Matthew 10:34).
 - b. *"And He said to them, "When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" And they said, "No, nothing." And He said to them, "But now, let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one. For I tell you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'And He was numbered with transgressors'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment." And they said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough." (Luke. 22:35-38)*
 - (1) This passage shows that the commands that Jesus gave to His disciples earlier are now no longer in force. While their King was with them, they functioned one way. Now that He is about to die they need to prepare differently.
 - (2) So instead of saying, "Put away those swords." He instead affirms their presence and tells them to bring them along.
- B. Perhaps the biggest issue I have with these two positions is that they tend to try to elevate the words of Jesus in the gospels above the rest of the bible. This is simply wrong and fails to remember that all the of the bible is actually the words of Christ.
 1. Jesus is God. Simple as that.
 2. The bible is the inspired Word of God.
 3. The Holy Spirit who inspired all who wrote the bible is God. Nothing in the bible is contrary or of less importance than other parts.
- C. Next week we will consider the two more aggressive positions that Christians take, the Preventative War and the Just War theories.

Benediction

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.