

*Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## *War, Violence and The Christian, Pt 6*

### **Selected Passages**

**Keywords:** War, Violence, End Times, Israel, Prophecy, Sin, Just War

**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. Today we examine the arguments and ideas of the Preventative and Just War theories.

#### **I. Introduction.**

- A. We come again to the subject of war and the Christian.
- B. At issue is whether war is a possible option for a Christian to support or participate in.
  - 1. Over the centuries various key positions were developed and various factions in the Church chose which they would affirm.
  - 2. Breaks down into two main categories of the Pacifist and the Activist positions.
  - 3. Pacifism is usually broken down into two subgroups: Complete non-resistance and Pacifism.
- C. Today we shift our attention to the Activist position, which again breaks into two key categories—Preventative War and Just War.
  - 1. At issue for both of these positions is whether there is a time in which the Church and individual Christians should rise up and take up arms to either defend themselves or their country; or to invade and seek to conquer another nation or people group?
  - 2. Where does the individual Christian fit into this situation?
  - 3. This gets a bit more sticky when you consider situations like Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia or Communist China. During pogroms in each of these nations massive numbers of people died in a multitude of ways.

*Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- a. In China:
  - b. The Bolshevik revolution :
  - c. Nazi Germany:
4. There is a well known quote that is actually not a direct quote. It goes, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” It likely comes from John Stuart Mill who said, “Let not any one pacify his conscience by the delusion that he can do no harm if he takes no part, and forms no opinion. Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing. He is not a good man who, without a protest, allows wrong to be committed in his name, and with the means which he helps to supply, because he will not trouble himself to use his mind on the subject.”  
(<https://www.openculture.com/2016/03/edmund-burkeon-in-action.html>, viewed December 1, 2023)
5. And it is out of these uncomfortable realities that gave rise to a more activist position regarding war and violence.

## **II. How Christians approach the issue of war.**

### **A. The Activist Position:**

1. As stated earlier, this comes in various forms but two of the most common positions are the Preventative War and the Just War.
  - a. These positions see war as permissible for a Christian in a fallen world.
  - b. There is a real effort to try to address the several passages that call Christians to be in submission to their governing authorities. Therefore if the government sees the need for war, the Christian should obey.

### **B. Preventative War**

1. A preventative war argues that a nation does not need to wait to be shot at before they attack in defense. They do not need to take a passive posture nor do they need to be slow to act if they believe they are being credibly threatened.

*Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

2. This position makes a lot of sense to many people simply on a logical level.
  3. Once war has begun then the nation conducting this war is to do it in a just manner. So in this position the question is really one of timing and causation.
- C. The more common position is what is known as Just War.
1. This position is the most common in the United States. It breaks into two aspects, each very important. The justification needed to go to war and then the just conduct in war.
  2. The purpose of this position is to clearly establish when it is right and necessary to go to war and then how to conduct a war thus preventing unnecessary bloodshed.
- D. Foundations:
1. Prior to the development of this theory by Christians, it existed in both the Roman and Greek empires.
  
  2. Augustine is usually seen as the key Christian figure to postulate this position. But understand also that Augustine, much like most of the early Church leaders, was under a strong influence of Greek philosophy.
    - a. “What is the evil of war? Is it the death of some who will soon die in any case, that others may live in peaceful subjection? This is merely cowardly dislike, not any religious feeling. The real evils in war are love of violence, revengeful cruelty, fierce and implacable enmity, wild resistance, and the lust of power, and such like; and it is generally to punish these things, when force is required to inflict the punishment, that, in obedience to God or some lawful authorities, good men undertake wars, when they find themselves in such a position as regards the conduct of human affairs, that right conduct requires them to act, or to make others act, in this way.” (Augustine of Hippo, *Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon* XXII. 74. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, p. 301).

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- b. Violence and war are not the problem; rather, sin is and it must be resisted.
3. However, the fullest expression of the Just War is found in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, considered to be one of the greatest theologians produced by the Roman Catholic Church.
4. There are two sets of criteria that are used in this position: (adapted from *A Biblical View on Just War*, Kerby Anderson)
  - a. **First the right to go to war.**
    - (1) There must be a just cause.
    - (2) Just intention.
    - (3) It is a last resort.
    - (4) Formal declaration.
    - (5) Limited objectives.
    - (6) Proportionate means.
    - (7) Noncombatant immunity.
  - b. **Second, the proper conduct during the war.**

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

*Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

(1) Distinction.

(2) Proportionality.

(3) Military necessity.

## E. Biblical Data:

1. Romans 12:17-21.

- a. Within the activist position this passage would be understood to refer to individuals rather than the government.
- b. But even on a larger, societal scale, the issue is seeking to be at peace. That is the normal, desirable posture for a Christian and should be for the nation as well. But sometimes that peace is not within your power to maintain.

2. Romans 13:1-7.

3. 1 Peter 2:13-14.

- a. Two purposes of government given here.
  - (1) First is to punish evil doers.
  - (2) Second, is to praise/reward those who do good.

*Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- b. The same arguments made in Romans 13 apply here. When a people rise up against the nation the government is free to resist them and punish them through force.

### III. Conclusion.

- A. This is an ever evolving position but not really an ever changing position.
- B. But let me leave us today with a reminder that war and violence is part of the very fabric of this age we live in. We see it in our homes, neighborhoods, cities and nations.
- C. In peaceful times people begin to forget the horror and destruction found in war. For them it is more like a theory. But to the ones who have gone through one it is never forgotten.
- D. Yet, we also know as Christians that there is a greater war occurring that most do not see. A holy war in the spirit realm.
  - a. We battle not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual forces of darkness. Our weapons ultimately are not physical but spiritual as we put on the armor of God and resist lies and tear down every stronghold by taking our hearts captive to the Word of God.
  - b. But we battle this because the power of sin is broken through Christ. And the presence of sin will be abolished for evermore in what the bible describes as the final war, where sin, death and Satan are cast away and all things become new.
  - c. We live in this age and we long and wait for the next. How we conduct ourselves now is the challenge. And it requires we think deep and on multiple levels.
- 2. So as Christians let us be peace-makers. But also let us understand how peace is made and how it is kept. For in this age, violence is often the means to bring peace.
- E. Next week I hope to lay out a basic theology of war and from that we can then consider why there is so much talk and angst over Israel and the current conflict with the Hamas.

### Benediction

**May the Lord answer you in your day of trouble. May the name of YHWH set you in a secure place on high. May He remember your faithfulness and prayers and may He grant you the true desires of your heart. Amen**

**M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p**

*Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*