

War as Valuing Life

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord. They said: *I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted; He has thrown the horse and its rider into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation. This is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a warrior; Yahweh is His name.* – Exodus 15:1-3 HCSB

The book of Deuteronomy is filled with laws governing warfare. These laws address the treatment of the enemy, courage in the face of opposition, the duty of officers prior to combat, terms of peace, environmental consciousness in warfare, the care of captured women and children and much more.

It is the tragic nature of warfare to produce collateral damage. Buildings are destroyed. The flow of electricity and clean water is disrupted. Innocent civilians are killed. This has been a fact of combat since the dawn of time.

No one wants it to happen. But compare war to the triage that doctors practice every day. There are times when a leg must be amputated in order to save the body. There are times when combat is required, even though it surely means that innocent lives will be lost, in order to save the lives of many more.

How many million more would have died if we had not fought Adolph Hitler? How many more casualties would we have suffered if there had been a brutal ground attack, going house to house, building by building, tunnel by tunnel in Japan, rather than bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

It is an unfortunate fact that wicked, foolish people often do not listen to anything but the whip. Sometimes, they do not even listen to that!¹

To allow terrorists to have the run of the world community because we lack the moral fortitude to withstand them is no different than allowing a serial rapist to run free in our neighborhood because we want to “understand where he’s coming from.”

The Lord God is clear in His stand that when a person’s blood is shed there must be retaliation.² Humanity is intrinsically valuable because it was created in God’s image. It does not matter what is the person’s race or creed. It doesn’t even matter what their sexual orientation is. Their value lies in the fact of Who created them.

That is why God requires a life for a life. A common error held by pacifists is that those who believe in capital punishment or the righteousness of self-defense or just warfare have a low view of human life. It is the exact opposite. We hold to such a high view of the value of every individual that we will fight tooth and nail to make sure that not one more life is lost unnecessarily.

¹ Proverbs 10:13; 17:10; 18:6; 19:29; 20:3; 26:3; 27:22

² Genesis 9:6