

War International Justice Series

Text: Matthew 5:9 HCSB Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called sons of God.

Issues: war; disarmament

1. A just war is an expression of God's justice.

Image of Psalm 45:3-6

Mighty warrior, strap your sword at your side. In your majesty and splendor - in your splendor ride triumphantly in the cause of truth, humility, and justice. May your right hand show your awe-inspiring deeds. Your arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you. Your throne, God, is forever and ever; the scepter of Your kingdom is a scepter of justice. –
Psalm 45:3-6 HCSB

It always interests me to watch the theological contortions well-meaning Christians go through in order to make the Scriptures fit their pacifistic views. Besides the simple facts of Yahweh describing Himself as a Warrior,¹ as the Lord of Hosts², and as being strong and mighty in battle,³ He repeatedly commands us to be strong and to take courage.⁴

The Bible commands us to be trustworthy,⁵ God-fearing,⁶ capable⁷ “point men” who will risk going into enemy territory in order to safeguard our families.⁸

Over and over again, He has commanded His people to bravely⁹ fight¹⁰ for what is right.¹¹ We should be models fit to be emulated¹² by our children who are largely disgusted with the last generation's waffling on issues of social and ecological justice.

Modern society has loudly broadcast its philosophy of weakness, tolerance, perversity and cowardice. It wants Christians to be confused about their identity and God's role in their lives. Somehow, mealy-mouthed confusion has become a hallmark of modern intellectualism just as it had in Jesus' day.¹³

Image of Ground Zero doll



A doll was found at “ground zero” in Manhattan that once belonged to a little child who was killed on bloody 9/11. Who among us would not try to save that child? What man would not seek

¹ Exodus 15:3

² Psalm 89:8; Isaiah 3:1; 10:16; Jeremiah 35:17

³ Psalm 24:8; 89:8

⁴ Deuteronomy 31:6-7, 23; Joshua 1:6, 9, 18; 10:25; 1 Chronicles 22:13; 28:20; 2 Chronicles 32:7

⁵ Exodus 18:21

⁶ Exodus 18:21

⁷ Exodus 18:25; 1 Chronicles 26:6

⁸ Numbers 13:2; 14:38

⁹ 1 Samuel 10:26

¹⁰ Joshua 1:14; 6:2-3, 13

¹¹ Job 17:8; Psalm 11:7

¹² Philippians 2:29

¹³ Matthew 7:28-29; Mark 1:27

to bring the perpetrators of that horrible act to justice?¹⁴ What man would not want to protect women and children?

Image of Adolph Hitler



What if the last generation had not stood up and fought Adolph Hitler? Where would we be? What if over two hundred years ago our forefathers had not gone to war? Where would America be?

Image of Abraham turning down Sodom's king's reward.



Abraham waged war in order to recover his captured nephew's family. He did not simply accept the injustice. He did not burn his draft card. He did not just allow Lot to sleep in the bed he'd made. He did not simply forgive the enemy and love him while hoping that he would change. Unjust, barbaric acts brought about a righteous indignation that caused him to follow God's will – which is always justice.¹⁵

Amalek fought against the Israelites and Israel defended itself.¹⁶ They did the same thing with the Midianites.¹⁷ The only way we can discount the hundreds of examples of tzaddiks going to war is to discount two-thirds of the Bible. Each of us must decide whether we will conform to God's image or futilely attempt to conform Him to ours – and we know where that leads!¹⁸

2. A just war expresses value for life.

Image of Exodus 15:1-3

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

¹⁴ Proverbs 24:10-12

¹⁵ Genesis 14

¹⁶ Exodus 17:9-10

¹⁷ Numbers 25

¹⁸ Romans 1:18-22

combat is required, even though it surely means that innocent lives will be lost, in order to save the lives of many more.

Image of American WWII casualties



How many million more would have died if we had not fought Adolph Hitler?

Image of Nuclear bomb



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!¹⁹

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.²⁰ 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.

3. A just war is a New Testament concept

Image of Luke 3:14

Some soldiers also questioned him: "What should we do?" He said to them, "Don't take money from anyone by force or false accusation; be satisfied with your wages." – Luke 3:14 HCSB

Some look on the doctrine of just war as a primitive and barbaric theology, but in this view, they have created a god in their own image.²¹ They have demeaned themselves and their fellow man; their theology debases mankind to some kind of cosmic accident unworthy of protection.

They often claim that the basis for the belief in the validity of a just war or of a war-prosecuting God can only be found in the Old Testament – as though immutable God²² changed His mind during the four hundred year silence between the Testaments!

Image of John the Baptist

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

²⁰ Genesis 9:6

²¹ Romans 1:18-22

²² Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 40:28; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 6:17-18; James 1:17



But isn't it interesting that John the Baptist didn't advise the soldiers to quit their jobs?²³ And an officer of the invading, Gentile army found approval for his demonstrated faith.²⁴ There was no mention of any gentle correction, "Now, you know you need to stop fighting..."

Paul taught that properly elected authority may use force in order to bring about justice. Along with increased responsibility, increased authority must come.²⁵

God allows a society to develop a police force to stop evil doers from within its borders. Similarly, society must be allowed to develop a military force to stop evil doers from attacking from outside its borders. It is only common sense - good stewardship - to take the battle to your enemy, fighting in and ruining his territory rather than your own.²⁶

Jesus used war as a positive illustration.²⁷ The Master was passionately zealous²⁸ for "rightness" and in righteous indignation chose aggressive physical action to bring it about.²⁹ He also said a king should make sure he had the resources to win a war – not just automatically capitulate.³⁰

In the Gospels, Jesus did say to turn the other cheek. However, if you look at the context, you will see that this is always to be done in response to religious persecution.

Further, it is a personal decision that can only be made for oneself. I cannot turn my wife's cheek. My role as her husband precludes it. If she decides to "turn the cheek" to religious persecution, then I must respect her decision. However, until then, I must fulfill my responsibilities as a husband and father and protect my family.³¹

It is true that Jesus said "Blessed are the peace makers"³² but notice that peace must be "made."³³

Image of police officers making an arrest



Every day police officers and DEA agents faithfully prosecute an ongoing war so that we might peacefully enjoy our lives.

Peacefulness is not passivity, for God demanded, "Isn't the fast I choose to break the chains of wickedness, to untie the ropes of the yoke, to set the oppressed free, and to tear off every yoke?"

Following that particular Mitzvah is going to demand the sacrifice of our comfort. He did not call us to a comfortable, feel-good theology but to the prosecution of justice.

4. So what is a just war?

²³ Luke 3:14

²⁴ Acts 10

²⁵ Romans 13:1-6

²⁶ Romans 13:1-4

²⁷ Luke 14:31

²⁸ John 2:17; Psalm 69:9

²⁹ Matthew 21:12; John 2:15

³⁰ Luke 14:31-32

³¹ Mathew 5:39; Luke 6:29

³² Matthew 5:9

³³ Romans 14:19

Image of Jeremiah 51:19-20

Jacob's Portion is not like these because He is the One who formed all things. [Israel is] the tribe of His inheritance; the Lord of Hosts is His name. You are My battle club, my weapons of war. With you I will smash nations; with you I will bring kingdoms to ruin. – Jeremiah 51:19-20 HCSB

Though God approves of the use of war³⁴, He still finds it repugnant.³⁵ He doesn't want anyone to die. He said He wants everyone to find eternal life³⁶ and He backed up those words by dying for that desire³⁷.

Therefore, before entering into any war, we must be sure that it is just. What is a just war? Five criteria must be met before combat may be pursued:

a. It must be ordered by an appropriate authority.³⁸ The government of Britain no longer represented or cared for its colonies and they rightly rebelled. That action gave us a (somewhat) representative government and freedom of worship.

b. Its purpose must be to bring about justice.³⁹ The U.S recognized both the tragedy of millions losing their lives under the Nazi regime and the potential threat to themselves if they did nothing. The U.S.' entry into that conflict brought about the creation of the State of Israel.

c. It must be undertaken with the right intentions.⁴⁰ I proudly participated in the First Gulf War as a Marine because Iraq had invaded its neighbor. And though I have spent much valuable time arguing for the doctrine of just war, I do not personally believe the U.S.' current war in Iraq is just. It is my belief that this particular war is not about justice but oil. Moses taught that we should not follow a crowd in wrongdoing.⁴¹ As a patriotic ex-Marine, I use my rights as a citizen of a free country to use legal means to protest what I view as an unjust war, hoping that my efforts will save the lives of fellow warriors as well as Iraqi citizens. I support our troops. I pray for them daily. I love them and hope for their safe return. Disagreeing with the pretext for this war does not imply that I am disloyal to this country or to our troops. It is a sad state when a free thinking citizen of our country is automatically considered unpatriotic because he thinks our leaders are human and can make mistakes.

d. It must have a reasonable chance of success.⁴² If there is any way possible, we should avoid going to war.⁴³ But if it is determined that war is the best way to save the most lives, then we must be certain that we have sufficient resources to see it through to victory.

e. It must be proportionate.⁴⁴ We may not, as the current president of Iran apparently desires, drop an atom bomb killing millions in response to a verbal insult.

Peace often comes at a cost of many acts of liberation. Jesus died once, but that spiritual battle must be fought every day, for every life, until He returns and establishes peace.

Until then we must continually pursue justice and peace – just like the Angel of the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who will one day rule with a rod of iron – sweet Jesus meek and mild.

³⁴ 2 Samuel 22:35

³⁵ 1 Chronicles 22:8-9; Psalm 68:30; 120:6-7; Revelation 13:10

³⁶ 2 Peter 3:9

³⁷ John 3:16; Romans 5:8

³⁸ Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-6; Titus 3:1

³⁹ Psalm 82:1-4; Isaiah 1:16-18; 56:1; 58:6-12; Micah 6:8; James 1:16-18

⁴⁰ Matthew 6:1-18; Philippians 2:4

⁴¹ Exodus 23:1

⁴² Luke 14:31-32

⁴³ Romans 12:18

⁴⁴ Exodus 21:23-27