

## **The Christian and War**

Prior to the attack on our country on September 11th, certain political leaders sought to instill their ideas into the minds of the people of our nation. Following the attack, many of those ideas were shattered. Gone are ideas of rapid world peace and disarmament through negotiation with our enemies. Patriotic fury has overtaken our people and visions of defeating our enemies have replaced false notions that our enemies are misunderstood; that we simply need to “talk” over our differences. Although views have changed, God’s Word has not. We have discovered that as a nation, we are not as enlightened as we once thought.

Recently, we have seen pictures both on television and in newspapers of the capture of the enemy and the freeing of cities. We have seen women and children rejoicing in the streets as years of oppression have come to an end. Our hearts are stirred within and we realize national freedom can only come and remain through military victory.

The renewal of patriotism and the desire for greater military strength has also caused an age-old argument to arise in the Church. *Should the Christian fight for his country?* Other related questions arise as well. Isn’t it better for a Christian to stand for peace and pray for our enemies rather than engaging them in battle? Doesn’t the Bible say, “Thou shall not kill”? Aren’t we supposed to “turn the other cheek” to our enemies? These are some of many areas I want to address in this issue.

### **Should a Christian Go to War for His Country?**

Hebrews 11:32 *And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephtha; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.*

33 *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,*

*34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*

What do Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephtha, and David have in common? They were all men of faith and all men of war. This chapter has told us, verse after verse, about the heroes of faith from the Old Testament. We are told that “without faith it is impossible to please God” (vs. 6). We are then told about men and women who through faith changed their world. Many saw miracles of children born or raised from the dead. Through faith, multitudes of Jewish people were led out of slavery. Others were led by faith to leave one land and go to another. One was even translated from the earth and taken to heaven through his walk of faith.

But does faith have any other purpose? Can faith be used beyond salvation, healing, the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and meeting of financial needs? The answer is “yes”. This passage tells us our faith can be used in time of war.

Faith can be used in two ways during a national conflict. First, faith can be used to protect us from harm in battle. Psalm 91:7 says, *“A thousand shall fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not come near you.”* I knew a young man who fought in Viet Nam who had written this verse inside his helmet. God’s Word preserved him in war. Many Christian soldiers have returned from war with tremendous testimonies of supernatural escape from death. The same God who preserved the small army of Abraham from the multitudes of soldiers of the enemy (Genesis 14) still preserves soldiers today.

Second, faith can be used to defeat the enemy. The faith of those heroes mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11 *“subdued kingdoms”*. To “subdue” means “to crush under foot”, as David did in 2 Samuel 8, verse one. Not only will God help an army to win a battle, He will also see to it that the enemy will never rise again. Many of the nations Israel went to war against, no longer exist. David fought against the Philistines and Assyrians. Neither nation exists today. Before Joshua went to battle against the Canaanites, God told him to kill the men, women, children, and animals. No remembrance was to be left of the Canaanite nations. God not only gave the Israelites

strength to fight, but also on more than one occasion, fought with them. God caused the earth to quit rotating for almost twenty four hours so Israel could finish fighting and win against five nations who came against them. At the end of the extended day, Joshua hung the five kings of those nations on trees (Joshua 10).

## **Righteous War**

The wars of Joshua and David may sound brutal and unloving, but they were righteous wars. Lately we have heard from our enemies they are fighting a “holy war”, but there is no such thing. Only God Himself can fight a holy war. He fought a holy war at the cross and won! A better expression for a “righteous war” is a “moral war”. It is moral to defend your nation from a brutal people who wish to enslave your citizens and remove your basic freedoms to worship God and raise your family as you wish. When Jesus comes back at Armageddon and frees the world from the tyranny and worldwide enslavement of Antichrist, it is declared “...in righteousness he does judge and make war” (Revelation 19:11). Our country has never aggressively sought to fight another nation and remove their freedoms. We have only gone to war to defend ourselves. In our present war, we are defending our citizens against nations who only wish to destroy us and remove our freedoms. They desire to make slaves of our people as they have of the men, women, and children of their own nation. God works with, and even fights for a nation who makes war “in righteousness”.

God always sends grace before judgment. Destruction was delayed for many hundreds of years after the preaching of Jonah to the Assyrians. Because they repented of their sin, God spared them from military defeat. They began to sin again and after many years, Nahum was sent to preach to them the second time. This time they did not repent and were destroyed. This story could be repeated many times in our own nation and in the history of Israel.

God gave Canaan four hundred years to repent of idolatry, child sacrifice, homosexuality and sexual perversion. They did not and were destroyed when Israel entered their land. Although Joshua did not defeat all the enemies God told him to

defeat, peace came to the land after the military victories were accomplished. The spoils of victory were given to Israel.

*So Joshua took the whole land...and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.*  
(Joshua 11:23)

## **Thou Shalt Not Kill?**

The sixth commandment seems to be very clear, *"thou shalt not kill"* (Exodus 10:13). But it becomes unclear when the Bible also tells us there is *"a time to kill and a time to heal"* (Ecclesiastes 3:3) and *"a time of war and a time of peace"* (Ecclesiastes 3:8). When God was so specific to tell the children of Israel how to fight, kill, and win wars, how could he also tell us not to kill?

The Hebrew word for *"kill"* found in this commandment refers to murder, not killing in general. It is a prohibition of homicide, not the prohibition of justified killing. This verse could be better translated, "thou shalt not commit murder". There is a time to kill, but *never* a time to commit murder. In our King James Version the prohibition of murder is correctly translated in Matthew 19:18 when Jesus told the rich young ruler, "thou shalt do no murder". This teaching becomes even clearer in Proverbs 6 when God describes for us the seven sins He hates. One of the sins He hates is "hands that shed innocent blood" (vs. 17). If God does not want us to shed innocent blood, it must be acceptable to shed guilty blood. Guilty blood is described in three ways in the Bible; capital punishment, self defense and national defense. In all three cases, God clearly condones the killing of others.

Many Christians call themselves "conscientious objectors." Based on such scriptures as *"thou shalt not kill"* they refuse to go to battle and fight for their home country. Moses faced the same situation when he stood at the border of Canaan in chapter 32 of Numbers. The two tribes of Reuben and Gad wanted to settle on the other side of the Jordan and not enter into the land. They wanted to become farmers and raise their families near the fertile river. Since they were not going into the promised land, they did not feel it necessary to fight with the other tribes.

Moses addressed the tribes of Reuben and Gad warning them of four consequences of refusing to defend their country.

1. *They would cause discouragement in those who go to battle* (Numbers 32:6, 7). Pacifism toward war causes the troops to become discouraged.
2. *Listening to man rather than God would also result in discouragement.*The children of Israel had not learned pacifism from God; they had learned it from their fathers. Just as the Israelites received the evil report from the ten spies, became discouraged, and as a result did not want to fight (Numbers 32: 8,9), their descendents were walking in the same pacifism.
3. *God becomes angry with those who refuse to fight with their brothers and defend their nation* (Numbers 32:10).
4. *The choice not to fight is called sin.*

*But if ye will not do so (go to battle), behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out* (Numbers 32:23).

### **When Should We Turn the Other Cheek?**

Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount, “...whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39). The answer to this verse lies in its context. Jesus was telling his disciples how to handle their testimony before the world. He was explaining to them their actions spoke as loudly as their words when witnessing for the Lord Jesus. If they were struck for being a believer in the Lord and attacked for their testimony for Him, they were not to retaliate. God would defend them. For the sake of the gospel, vengeance belongs to the Lord, not to us. Jesus was not speaking of self-defense from criminals or defending the nation from evil enemies. Quite the contrary, Jesus told his disciples to take a sword for defense in their travels (Luke 22:36) and to have weapons in their homes to defend against thieves (Luke 11:21). It is quite acceptable to God and legal today to have weapons in the home. Our American

Constitution gives us the right. Teaching our children to defend themselves against bullies is acceptable to the Lord.

But when we are attacked for our stand for Jesus Christ, we should make no retaliation. Jesus did not take up arms against His own crucifixion. He could have called legions of angels to His defense. Paul was persecuted for the gospel as well as Stephen, Peter, John and others. They left their defense in the hands of God, as we should.

### **If You Should be Called to Fight in Battle**

If you should be called upon to fight and defend our nation, here are a few points you should know. First, God Himself is a God of war. He said He would teach your hands to make war (Psalm 18:34, 144:1). Secondly, Jesus is known by titles of war. One of them is *Lord of Hosts*. This is a translation of the Hebrew phrase “Jehovah of Armies”. Jesus is the leader of the armies of angels in heaven. He has never lost a battle yet. Thirdly, as God fought with the heroes of the Word of God, He will fight with you today. He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Finally, if God the Father backs you, Jesus Christ supports you and the Word of God endorses you fighting for our nation, you can boldly declare in battle, “If God be for me, who can be against me?”

Bob Yandian

**© 2003 by Bob Yandian Ministries. Reproduction of written text in whole or part without written permission is prohibited. All Rights Reserved**