

## INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Leviticus 19:17-18.**
- B. This sermon is from the Bible Question Box. The question reads, "Preach a sermon on the OT command 'Thou shall not kill' and the NT Christian serving in the military."
- C. This is a very good question deserving of our consideration.
- D. Simply put: Are you a dove, or are you a hawk?
- E. I will confess to you up-front:
  - 1. I am not opposed to a Xian serving in the military (it is not a sin).
  - 2. I am a pacifist (a dove) when it comes to the 'war question.'

## I. THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

- A. Exodus 20:13 says "You shall not murder."  
Some translations say "kill" and it make no difference. Human life is not to be taken.
- B. Taking another life, without cause from God, is condemned. See Ex. 21:12, 14, 18.  
(Ex 21:12) "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death."  
(Ex 21:14) "If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily, you are to take him even from My altar, that he may die."
- C. Every act that endangers human life is condemned:
  - 1. Carelessness (Deut. 22:8).  
"When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone falls from it."
  - 2. Wantonness (Lev. 19:14).  
'You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD.'
  - 3. Hatred, anger, revenge (Lev. 19:17-18).  
'You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. 18 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.'
- D. What about God killing and ordering His people to kill?
  - 1. God did not violate Himself or His will by giving command to kill (1Sam. 15:3). The command not to kill is directed against man's taking matters into his own hands, thus venting his wrath on those whom he hates.  
'Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'"
  - 2. God, the creator of man and of the universe, has the right to do whatever He will, and man has no right to call Him in question. Whatever God does is right *because* He does it, and whatever He commands is right *because* He commands it, no matter how man may feel about it (Dan. 4:35; Psa. 115:3).  
(Dan 4:35) "And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?'"  
(Psa 115:3) But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.
  - 3. Some religions of the world today use this same reasoning and call their battles "holy wars." Yet, the burden of proof is still on them to prove that God so directed it.

## II. SOME WAYS TO JUSTIFY COMBATANT SERVICE.

- A. Important note: One does not have to justify military service. That is not a sin. What needs to be justified is the taking of another life while in the military.
- B. A chaplain in the U.S. Army presents the following to justify killing by Christian men:

1. Jesus cleansed the temple (see Jn. 2:13-22).  
 The Point: Jesus used violent means to accomplish His ends.  
 Answer: Jesus used the scourge, but that is far from killing men. Under no circumstances would He kill, nor allow others.
  2. The Centurion at Capernaum (see Mt. 8:5-10).  
 The Point: It is possible to have great faith in Jesus and still be a soldier.  
 Answer: There are many works that a Xian can do, but he will not "destroy men's lives."
  3. Jesus came to not to send peace, but a sword (see Mt. 10:34).  
 The Point: Jesus said there would be fighting.  
 Answer: The sword is a spiritual one, not physical (see 2Cor. 10:5; Eph. 6:17).
  4. There will always be wars and rumors of wars (see Mt. 24:6).  
 The Point: Jesus tells us that there will always be wars that need to be fought.  
 Answer: This is a true statement, but it doesn't make war (killing) right in God's sight. Offenses are inevitable (see Mt. 18:7), but woe to the man who takes part in either one.
  5. Sell your cloak and buy a sword see (Lk. 22:36-38).  
 The Point: Jesus authorizes the use of force when necessary.  
 Answer: Jesus is contrasting this sending out of the apostles with the previous one. He declares that things will be different. The apostles may purchase a sword, but it will not be for the purpose of killing (Jn. 18:10). It is not a sin for a Xian to own guns, it is the purpose for which they are used that may be wrong.
  6. The aggressor is to die by the sword (see Mt. 26:52).  
 The Point: Since the aggressor is to die by the sword it would not be wrong for a Xian to be the sword bearer.  
 Answer: It would be much better if the aggressor is killed by another aggressor. This was true in the OT of many sinful, aggressive Gentile nations.
  7. We must stand guard of our possessions (Lk. 11:21,22).  
 The Point: If we can stand guard of our personal things, then we can stand guard of national things.  
 Answer: Protection and security are one thing, being an aggressor that kills is another.
  8. Worldly kingdoms are to fight against one another (Mt. 18:36).  
 The Point: Jesus supposed approves of carnal kingdoms settling their differences with the sword.  
 Answer: Jesus is showing the different between His kingdom and those of the world. Members of His kingdom will not use the sword to fight and kill; even if those kingdoms of the world do so. Just because the kingdoms of the world fight and kill doesn't make it right.
- C. Why do governments bear the sword?
1. To secure a peaceful and tranquil life for its citizens by punishing evil-doers.
  2. God has directed the state to punish those who do wrong in society, including the death penalty if the state so desires. Because it is authorized by God, it means that this kind of killing is not wrong.
  3. God has not authorized nation to rise up against nation. These kinds of wars are not divinely authorized and constitute a violation of the sixth commandment (see Rom. 13:9).
- D. Some have tried to justify combatant service by the following:
1. Self-defense.  
 Answer: Would Xians want to be guilty of returning evil for evil? Matthew 5:38-42 is about not taking personal revenge. Jesus is not arguing that a person can't defend themselves against attack. Xians can defend but not permitted to kill. Allow God and the State to take vengeance (see Rom. 12:17-19).

2. Protection of the home.  
Answer: A Xian will do their best NOT TO KILL the invader, while aggressive soldiers do their best TO KILL the invaders.
3. Being subject to the Powers that Be.  
Answer: One should serve the government that they live under. But God is always served first. I could not in good conscience serve my government by doing things that God said were sinful.
4. NT soldiers.  
Answer: There are things that a Xian could do as a soldier that does not violate NT principles. And there are things they could do that would. Each individual must judge.
6. "Then Would My Servants Fight."  
Answer: Jesus is simply saying that soldiers of worldly kingdoms do fight and those who are members of His kingdom do not. A Xian is first a member of X's kingdom (church) and then secondarily, a member of an earthly kingdom or government.
7. Communists will Close all the Churches.  
Answer: The 1st century Xians did not fight when Stephen was murdered, or when Nero burned all the brethren in Rome, or when Diocletian ordered every church building closed. The scripture does not read, "Blessed are they that kill Communists for righteousness sake" it still says (see Mt. 5:10).
8. Wars of Defense.  
Answer: You may think you are fighting a defensive war, but tell that you the enemy you're shooting at! While I believe in self-defense, I don't believe in killing.
9. Christians are not Responsible, Just Agents.  
Answer: Were the soldiers not responsible in some way when they nailed Jesus to the cross. Could they kill him and say they were doing this in the name of the Lord?
10. Justice in a Secular Society.  
Answer: Jesus saw many cruel and inhuman things being done by the Roman government of His day, yet, He did not marshal an army to fight against these injustices. Jesus wanted to change the world in a non-violent way, one person at a time.

### III. **WHAT SHOULD A CHRISTIAN DO IN WARTIME?**

- A. Some things a Xian can never do:
  1. Indulge in race hatred.
  2. Kill.
- B. Some things a Xian must do:
  1. Pay taxes (see Rom. 13:6-7).
  2. Pray for all governments (see 2Th. 3:1-2; 1Tim. 2:1-3).
  3. Fight against all evil (see Eph. 6:10f).
  4. Relieve suffering (see Lk. 10:33-34).

### IV. **A SAFE POSITION.**

- A. I believe the burden of proof in this issue is on those who try to justify war and Xians going to war.
- B. I am a pacifist when it comes to war for many reasons. But one such reason that is important to me is illustrated by the following scenario:
  1. A Xian in one country feels it is Biblical and right to serve his government in time of war even to the point of killing.
  2. Another Xian in the opposing country feels it is Biblical and right to serve his government in time of war even to the point of killing.
  3. Therefore, you now have two Xians, arguing from the Bible, that it is right to kill one another.
  4. What could be farther from the truth?

## CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. In summary:
  - 1. I believe it bad policy to try and use the examples of Israel's wars with its Gentile neighbors as a proof-text for "God-approved" nations today who go to war.
  - 2. A Xian is not to take personal revenge for the wrongs do against him, but leave room for the wrath of God (which may involved the State taking action).
  - 3. It is permissible to take self-defense as long as it is non-violent. There is a difference between stopping an aggressor and hurting an aggressor.
  - 4. It is possible to service in the military and not be guilty of killing or murdering.
  - 5. The "war question" must be answered by each individual, and we must respect the right of choice each has concerning this matter.
  - 6. I believe there is a big difference in a government trying to keep the peace by punishing evil-doers and in nations rising up against nations for war. A nation's internal law needs to be enforced, making the police and the courts and necessary part of government.
- B. I'm sure there are some questions that you have concerning this subject that I have not discussed. There are some questions that I have that I have not discussed in this lesson.
- C. But hopefully, whether you agree with my pacifist position or not, I have made you think more clearly and objectively about this issue. May we always strive to do what the Bible says.
- D. There is a war you must fight in--the spiritual war for your soul. This war you can fight in and win! Jesus has been victorious over the devil in this war.
- E. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.