

Victory in Christ

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Well, back to the Psalms, Psalm 149. Let's look at that tonight. I have so enjoyed rediscovering the Psalms. I studied through this and preached through this so many, many years ago and, honest, as I look back over it, it's like it's born again in my heart and it's such a blessing. Psalm 149 as we get toward the end of the Psalms. We're in the hallelujah Psalms, if you will, where the Psalmist is just writing in great praise to the Lord. So let's read it together. Psalm 149, beginning in verse 1,

1 Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise in the congregation of the godly ones. 2 Let Israel be glad in his Maker; Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King. 3 Let them praise His name with dancing; Let them sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre. 4 For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation. 5 Let the godly ones exult in glory; Let them sing for joy on their beds. 6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, 7 To execute vengeance on the nations And punishment on the peoples, 8 To bind their kings with chains And their nobles with fetters of iron, 9 To execute on them the judgment written; This is an honor for all His godly ones. Praise the LORD!

As you read this Psalm and really any Psalm, there are a couple of things to keep in mind and it parallels very closely with what we've been talking about in the book of Luke recently, and that is you can't read a Psalm and especially this Psalm, without understanding it has great spiritual lessons for believers. The Psalmist is writing from a genuine convert's perspective so there is real application here to our personal spiritual lives and pilgrimage. But also there is real application for the nation of Israel and literally how God will one day restore Israel in what we call the millennial kingdom on the earth and then they will have the ultimate victory with Christ as their head. But even when Israel is restored, she is restored as a regenerate people; not just because she's Israel, but because God will save literally a remnant and bring them together and rule as King with them and over them in the earth. So this whole Psalm is about the victory we have in Christ.

First of all, let's think about the past victory; what's already settled and come to completion. We see that in verses 1 through 4 and this, again, is the victory that you have

at conversion. Listen, you're only converted once, then you remain converted. Now, you're not perfect yet, you're not sanctified in perfection yet, you're not glorified, certainly not at all, but you are converted. The regeneration of your heart has taken place, and that's what the Psalm talks about here, the Psalmist rather talks about when he says, "Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song." That whole phrase "a new song," I believe every time you see that in the Bible, it's talking about becoming a new creature, becoming one of God's saved ones, one of God's people. 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creature," or new creation, "the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

When you get saved, your song changes. Have you noticed that? When you get saved, your song changes. I find that a little humorous because I remember not long after my conversion listening to some of the music I used to listen to, and not all music that the world listens to is evil, I'm not suggesting that; much of it talks about the experiences of life and, certainly, love that people experience. Now, some of them are too far out absolutely, but some of it's okay. But I remember listening to some of those songs thinking, "This is the silliest stuff I have ever heard." It's just really nonsense because once you begin to grasp the great wisdom and beauty and power of God's love in your life as one of his children, that's the new true song that wells up in your heart, and that song just overpowers the other songs; not that all of them are wrong, it's just that they are so inferior to the glorious praises of the one true God. And that's why a good Bible study and good small groups and certainly good preaching is essential so that your heart has the wisdom and the knowledge of all the great glories of this God so that you will know him better and love him more and that song will be more richly dwelling in your heart. Don't you love the kind of songs Brother Tom tries to get us to sing here? We sing some simple folksy songs but we try to sing songs rich in Bible doctrine that remind us of the greatness of God. When you get saved, your song changes.

Now, he says, "Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise in the congregation of all the godly ones." Now, that's the same as saying in all the saints. Once again, this is for converted people only. The world cannot sing these songs. You see, the godly ones praise God for the victory that has been achieved on their behalf. Now, yes, we can get a little dull and, yes, we can grow a little cold, but if you're a true child of God, you won't stay that way very long. Something will prick your heart again; something will stir your heart again. I have some people that have been talking to me lately and they're younger in the Lord and I just say this because I think it makes the point, and this one person will say, "I need to go and hear some Jeff Noblit preaching," and I hope what that person means is, "I want the word of God; I want to learn more about the greatness, the glories and the wonders of my God and my salvation."

And that's what you want to hear. That's what we all want to be about because it reminds us again and, you know, having, what, five years in Hebrews, about three years in Ephesians, 25 years now in Luke and all the preaching we've done here, and it is, now folks, listen to me, I have spent, I cannot, especially in the first 20, 25 years of my pastorate, I would spend 20 hours on a sermon, I mean, a hard study, and then try to meditate beyond that. I don't do that anymore because, quite honestly, I don't need it

anymore, but you don't get that for about 30 years. I mean, there's just a reservoir of truth you draw from and it's not as exhausting as far as time, but here's my point: I haven't come close, I haven't come close to getting bored. I haven't come close to exhausting what's there. Folks, look, he is inexhaustible. You cannot reach the end of the greatness, the glories, and the wonders, and the beauties of God. Oh, this new song just has verse after verse after verse after verse.

So we are to praise him as the godly ones, verse 1 says, for the victory he has achieved. You see, in Christ we have victory over the penalty of sin. The penalty is no longer against us. We have victory over the permanency of death. We may enter the door of death but in Christ Jesus, we go right through that door and straight out the back door into the glories and the welcome presence of our God, and in Christ Jesus we have overcome the pain of hell and the presence and the punishment of hell. That's not in our future. That has all been taken care of. We have a new song to sing, the Psalmist says.

Well, verse 2, he says, "Let Israel be glad in his Maker; Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King." Now, Israel here means the true spiritual Israel, those who really know God. Not just the national or bloodline Jew, but one who really knows God like the Psalmist does. He talks about God being our Maker and our King. You know, it's really not my job and it is certainly not my burden to talk to you or preach you into praising the Lord, but it is my hope that somehow in God's grace I might so preach the glories of Christ to you that you will so know him, so be affected by what he has done for you, that you cannot help but praise him. You see, he is the perfect King.

Our country was founded on the notion that there would no longer be a monarchy or a king with absolute control of the people. Well, I agree with that, unless that king is Jesus and he is truly our King, but he's the perfect King. Think about it, he deals with us in perfect wisdom, with perfect power. He corrects us with perfect discipline. He looks after all of our cares with perfect care. He feels deeply for us with perfect compassion. And he is certainly love and does love us with a perfect love. Now, that's a King you can rejoice in.

Now, today we live in what's called a democracy, actually a representative republic, I think would be a little more accurate to describe what we are. But, you know, the Bible doesn't necessarily promote any certain form of government. I do think under God he blessed our country with unique liberties and freedoms because there was enough of a strong Christian consensus that people could actually be free and still be sane and decent and responsible. But look, when we lose Christianity in our country, we begin to lose our liberties because Christianity is what causes people to behave right, and when people start misbehaving, then that gives way to giving power to a totalitarian so that he might enforce behavior that we all might live civilly in the country. So as we continually lose our Christian base, we will continually lose our liberties. That's why you keep hearing gun control. That's why you keep hearing we've got to keep forcing people not to speak like this or speak like that, as if they could tell us not to say certain things about certain behaviors, if you will, and all of a sudden our heart is changed. Isn't it amazing how all

men can do is strike up a bunch of dumb laws to try to help people love each other. Only Christianity can cause men's hearts to genuinely love one another.

Well, I'm chasing a little bit of a rabbit here but we live in a country with a unique democratic system that has worked. As one of our founding fathers said, that our government is only suitable for a religious people, and he wasn't talking about Islam. He meant the religion of the Scriptures. That's what our founding fathers believed. There is a radical difference in religions and the representative democracy that we have will not function under an Islamic rule or any other religious environment but Christianity. It's always been that way. I'm sorry. I don't care who that offends. That doesn't matter to me. It just will not work under any other religious influence or doctrine.

But anyway, we must be careful that we don't glory in democracies because we've gone around the world trying to set up democracies and we found out they don't work very well because the democracies are being developed in countries where people do not know God and do not know truth. A godless democracy may not be any better than godless communism. You see, the democracy isn't what makes our country great, it was the principles of the Christian religion that are behind the democracy that made this country great. But one day, leaving that discussion to what really that text is talking about, one day we're going to live under the absolute totalitarian rule of a sovereign King and this kingdom will be a kingdom where every desire of this King is to be met and will be met by his subjects with perfect obedience, but this King is Jesus, and this King loves us with a love incomparable, with a love indescribable, and with a love inconceivable. He even gave his life for us and he died for us that we might live as his own and be citizens of his kingdom.

So the Psalmist wants you to dwell on that. The Psalmist wants that to work you up a little bit because look what he says in the next verse, verse 3, "Let them praise His name with dancing; Let them sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre." Dancing. "Pastor, is dancing wrong?" Not unto the Lord it's not wrong. Maybe you and mom want to get home and put on a little Kenny G and dance around, that's fine with me too. Look, we're not stick in the muds, alright, amen? Am I telling y'all a little too much that you don't need to know this evening? I don't know but there is a dancing even in a public setting that is unto the Lord.

Now, this is not the improper and suggestive dance of this world. This is a dance of pureness and holy devotion and delight in our God. We do know from Jewish history that when they would dance it was their practice to always separate the men from the women and typically when you hear of dancing, you have the younger ladies who were involved in it and they did it in unison and they did that together and, again, typically separate from the men. However, we do know in Exodus 15 that David danced before the Lord. So there is a time to express our joy. Now, we've all seen, all you've got to do is turn on the television, we've all seen this forced when it's a fleshly or even what the old-timers would say be guarded against emotionalism. People can get stirred up into the rhythm and into the dynamics of a worship service and it may not be the kind of dancing the Lord is really referring to here. And I'll say this, if you don't have much dance when it's just

you and Jesus alone and you only turn it on in an exciting service, it may not be true dancing unto the Lord at all. But, I don't know, most of us Baptists could use a little more dancing, probably when it comes to loving Jesus and honoring him.

Well, what a great verse, verse 4. They're all great, aren't they? There's not one greater than the other but what a verse. Look at verse 4, "For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation." That is an amazing thought. How in the world could the infinitely pure and holy God take pleasure in you? How could this God take pleasure in me? He takes pleasure in his people in his sovereignty, now listen to me, if you don't get sovereign grace, you don't get 98% of the Bible. In his sovereignty, he has chosen a people and he has chosen to cast unique favor toward those people, and he takes pleasure in those people. Now, from the human side, all we can see is those who repent and believe are his people, 100% true, but the Bible doesn't just give us man's side. When are we going to learn you don't interpret the Bible mainly from a man-centered perspective. The Bible is mainly written from God's perspective, and we get so bent out of shape sometimes because we see this awesome sovereignty of God as if God's got to humble himself to pacify us. He does not. God takes pleasure in his elect children. What a statement.

You know, we soon tire of pleasure that is centered on earthly things. Now, there's a lot of pleasures under common grace that are not necessarily wrong or evil, but do you ever wonder why can't, Alabama won the national championship, why can't we just stop right there and be done with football forever. Just quit it? Just stop it. Don't play another game, don't have another practice because 12 hours later it's gone and we've got to think about another one, another game, another season, another sport. I mean, all the pleasures under common grace, they just kind of run out. That's why we have to keep replenishing them. But, you know, if you really love somebody, you never really tire of being in their company, and to think we are the special objects of his love and his care. He has chosen to bring us out of darkness into light and God is saying to us, "I never," now listen, "I never get tired of you. I don't get tired of you." It's not because we're special, it's because we are the objects of his special work therefore he never gets tired of us. Wow, it's just a phenomenal thought.

You know, the commander-in-chief sometimes will be somewhere and they'll have like the Marine Corps band and they'll play "Hail to the Chief" or something in his honor and that makes him feel well and I think what the Psalmist is saying, God takes pleasure in us. He likes to see us praising him. He likes to see us praying unto him. He likes to see us with joy about him. I think Dr. Pipers' probably right when he says that God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in him. When he is really what we desire and he's really our appetite, that gives God great, great pleasure.

What pleasure does God get out of the stars that are in heavens? Well, five words will tell you why he gets pleasure out of the stars, he made these stars also. They're his work. But Scripture says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." If you're a child of God, if

you are saved, listen to me, from eternity past, you are the special work of God and he takes pleasure in his work.

The Bible says here in verse 5, continuing on, "Let the godly ones exult in glory." I'm sorry, last part of verse 4 is where I need to be, "He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation." And I think in the spiritual connotation here, we are all the afflicted ones. Before he saved us, our lives were afflicted with guilt, with being downcast, with being heavy laden and burdened. We had emotional afflictions because of our separation: depression and anxiety and fears and frustration and confusion. Now, wish we could say the moment we're converted that's all relieved but the moment you are converted, you begin to be enabled to handle and deal with these things. You can set up a beachhead of right-thinking in your heart about these things that are bringing affliction, emotional affliction in your lives. Mental afflictions with wrong thinking and wrong morals and wrong values and wrong religion. Physical afflictions, disease and alcohol and drugs and tobacco and many things that afflict us in life. In other words, we were indeed the afflicted ones but afflicted by our doing, by our own sin, and our own waywardness, and our own willing offensiveness to a holy God. But the Bible says he is afflicted, he is rather, how does he, he will beautify, rather, the afflicted ones with salvation. Then God saves us because we were one great big ugly mess and anointed us, now listen, anointed us with the beauty of salvation.

Don't you love how the Psalmist puts every bit of the work and responsibility for you being a child of God on God? He beautifies the afflicted ones with salvation. All you could ever be in all of your work, in all of your effort, in all of your achievement, all you could ever be is an afflicted one full of guilt and sin and lostness and doom and condemnation. But he beautifies us with faith, "For by grace are you saved. Through faith and that not of yourselves, it's the gift of God, not as the result of works lest any man should boast." God gave you the gift of faith. It came from God. He beautified you with faith. If you believe on Christ, you are one who has received the gift of faith, the beautiful gift of faith.

The Bible says the Holy Spirit has shed the love of God abroad in our hearts. There is a love for God and a love for God's work and a love for God's church and a love for God's people that begins to well up in us after conversion. He beautified us with that love. Hey, let me ask you, have you ever gotten aggravated at folks at church? Have you ever got put out with one of the saints of God at church and then you realize that if you're a saint of God you've just got to forgive them and get over it because God has beautified your heart with love for them, and nothing is big enough, nothing is important enough, nothing is, get over your, get over yourself. You are not that important. "Well, he offended me." Well, yippye yi you kay ya. What does it matter? They are God's beautified one. You're God's beautified one. That's more important than all the stuff that might come up.

Now we know, let's be balanced, the Bible gives a way for us to be reconciled if we have a conflict, but you be reconciled if you have a conflict. Why? Because God has beautified your life with love, the love of God, and if God loved Gary enough to pick him out and die for him, then I ought to love him enough to forgive him if he is mean to me, and Gary

has never been mean to me, by the way. But if he was, he ought to be able to do that for me. Why? Because I'm one of those God has chosen to beautify with his love and salvation and he has just given us a special love one another. He has beautified us with joy. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. With wisdom, as we study the word of God, he gives us insight on what's going on in the world, what's going on in men's hearts. Oh, how he beautifies, rather beautifies the afflicted ones with salvation. We've got to hurry on. That's all the praise of what he has done. The victory that has already been accomplished.

Now, let's hurry, II, I've only got three, II. There is a persevering victory. You know, we fight from victory to victory. We do not persevere to gain victory, we persevere because we have victory. Did you hear that? We don't persevere as Christians. The old Baptist doctrine was not once saved always saved, our forefathers called it the perseverance of the faith. It means you continue on failing, falling short, but repenting and going on for God; persevering on because you're one of his true saved ones. And we have something of that sanctifying persevering process that comes out in this section of the text. Verse 5, "Let the godly ones exult in glory; Let them sing for joy on their beds." Exulting in glory speaks of being confident in our standing before God. We exult in the glory of the full, free and forever salvation he has given to us.

One of the real keys to overcoming sin in your life is praising God that he has already overcome it for you. You see, what Satan wants you to do is focus on what you're trying to achieve, but one of the things you must, and there is, there is an aspect of discipline and work in overcoming things, I understand that, but we so often miss the truth that what we need to do is claim the victory as already won and give God the glory for saving a wretch like us. When you sin, it's a good opportunity for you to say to God, "God, isn't that just like me?" Don't say, "God, I'll never do that again." You liar. You're a liar. Say, "God, isn't that just like me? I'm one of those afflicted ones. I'm one of those failures, but you have chosen me as the object of your favor and grace and saved me and given me the victory." You see, this assurance that Christ has already fully and permanently saved us, is the foundation for victory in our daily life over the enemy and over sin.

Now, he goes a little further, he says, "Sing for joy on their beds." You know, people who are afflicted with guilt, dealing with emotional afflictions or mental afflictions or even physical afflictions, they seem to be especially tormented at night. As a matter of fact, let me read an earlier Psalm. David said, "I am weary with my sighing and every night I make my bed swim. I dissolve my couch with my tears." It seems like David is saying, "I can put on a pretty good face during the day but at night my heart is broken in a thousand pieces."

But the Psalmist us here says we ought to be praising God in those quiet moments, alone just he and I. You see, the truly saved and forgiven one can exult with praise at night on their beds and why is that? Because they have a clear conscience. You say, look, it doesn't matter what you've done, where you've done it, what you've been involved in, Christ has made propitiation for your sin and as far as justification goes, you stand clear before him. So in those quiet moments, now look, when it's only you and God and the

honesty of what you are before him, you can say, "Praise God. He knows it all and he has forgiven me." That's good news. That's reason to praise the Lord.

Well, verse 6, "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand." Of course, that would have application to Israel as she will be a part and partner with Christ as he comes to avenge his and their enemies, but I think there has to be a powerful spiritual parallel for all Christians of any age and that is the two-edged sword speaks of the word of God. Hebrews 4:12 calls the word of God a sharp two-edged sword. It is the offensive weapon given to us in the armor that we put on.

If you will remember back in the garden of Eden, Eve was tempted as Satan twisted the word of God and tried to make Eve feel like if she did what God tells her to do she's going to be robbed of something. Now, ladies, ever since that first temptation, Satan has been screaming that in ladies' ears. "If you do what God says, you're going to be left out. If you do what God says, you're going to be taken advantage of. If you do what God says, you're not going to get your fair shake in life." He screams that at ladies so women have to rise up and act like men and try to work like men and get positions like men because they are scared to death they're going to lose something. And you see all these women all over the world achieving all these positions, my thought just goes over and over and over and over to who is taking care of the home? Who is taking care of the home? Who is taking care of the babies? Am I suggesting that all work is sin? I'm not saying that but I'm saying this Satanic seduction to get women's hearts and vision outside of their husbands and outside of their home because if you don't do all that you're going to miss something, you'll get robbed of something, it started with Eve when Satan said, "Has God said? Has God said if you eat of that tree?" God really is saying as Satan would say to her, "God is really just trying to rob you, Eve, because if you eat of that tree, you'll have the knowledge of good and evil." He's always done that and Eve did not use the two-edged sword of the word of God, but compare that to Jesus in Luke 4 when Jesus was in the temptations in the wilderness and every time Satan came at Jesus twisting the word of God, Jesus corrected it and put it right back on him, and he overcame. He persevered in victory using the word of God because it is a sharp two-edged sword. It strikes a deadly blow at all falsehood and all wickedness.

C. H. Spurgeon said this about this part of the text, he says, "If we do not praise, we shall grow sad in our conflict." Now, remember that. Now look, there are many times in your conflict, your battle, you're not going to feel like praying but you must decide to praise. As someone said, there are times when you can't pray your way through, you have to praise your way through it. There are times when you have to, as an act of the will, throw your hands toward heaven and praise God for his goodness and his grace and all that he is accomplishing, even though it looks awful to you wherever you are at that moment. That's what Spurgeon is saying here. "If we do not praise, we shall grow sad in our conflict, and if we do not fight, we shall become presumptuous in our song." So there is praising and there is willful fighting against the evil that we find in our hearts, sin we find in our lives, difficulties and trials that we face. "If we do not praise, we shall grow sad in our conflict. If we do not fight, we shall become presumptuous in our song. And there is the happy blending of the chorister and the crusader." Nobody can say it like Spurgeon.

Finally, III. The permanent victory. He has talked about the past victory, we have a new song, we are the godly ones. That's settled. The penalty of our sin is done with. We are justified through Christ in the eyes of our holy God. Then he talked about the persevering victory that we have to keep fighting on through as we're journeying down here. But lastly, he gives something of a preview of our coming permanent victory and this points directly to the millennial kingdom and it's centered on regenerate and redeemed Israel. He says there beginning in verse 7, "To execute vengeance on the nations And punishment on the peoples, To bind their kings with chains And their nobles with fetters of iron, To execute on them the judgment written; This is an honor," it's an honor to do all that. It's an honor, "for all His godly ones. Praise the LORD!" The Psalmist is saying there is coming a day and a time when God will return at the end of the seven years of tribulation, he will gather elect Israel, but before he does all that, the saints of God will return with him and he will destroy the wicked.

Now, when he's talking about this destruction upon them and it's an honor to be a part of this destruction of the wicked, what he's saying is that these are the incorrigible wicked. These are the hardened wicked who have far, far, far passed over God's deadline. Judgment is the only thing that awaits them and in some form, we work with God in that final crusade of overcoming the wicked. Now listen to me: those who have spurned God, rejected his Son, pushed aside his law, blasphemed the name of his holy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, deserve the wrath of God. That's what the Psalmist is saying.

As a matter of fact, just to close, let's go over to Psalm 19 real quick, Revelation 19. Would you do that? Revelation 19 and let's get what I think is the culmination of what this Psalm is talking about. Revelation 19, beginning in verse 11, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness," in righteousness. In other words, it is the right and true and good thing to do. "In righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven," I have to believe that includes us because we're raptured out up already with him, "clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.' Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, 'Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.'" These of the incorrigibly wicked. They cannot be reformed. They have crossed God's deadline. They deserve wrath and judgment.

And then their kings and their nobles, that's the way the Psalmist would word it in Psalm 149, look at verse 20 of Revelation 19, "And the beast," the antichrist, "was seized, and

with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone." So they are enchained and thrown and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. "And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh." So there is coming one great final showdown between the forces of heaven and the forces of hell, and the forces of heaven will mightily overcome and destroy the forces of hell, and we are his godly ones in this conflict only because in infinite, marvelous, wonderful grace, he chose to beautify us with salvation and that puts us on his team. That's the only reason you're not one of the victims of his holy wrath. That is the only reason, the great, matchless, sovereign, choosing grace of God. "Wait a minute, Brother Jeff, I repented in belief." Only because in grace he sought you first. He sought you first.

So there is a sense in which we are humbled beyond thought that we would get to be a part of God's loving, glorious, blessed, eternal family, yet without losing that thought, we come over here and embrace that we will rejoice and come in to Jesus when he slays all the wicked. And we're wicked like them, we just happen to be the objects of grace because it's righteous and right for him to do so. The text says he comes in righteousness to wage war, and that's why as Christians our heritage as Baptist people is, we have never been a part of a state religion and a state army whereby we crusaded with force to cause men to turn to our beliefs. No, we would prefer rather to give our lives in martyrdom to win them to our faith until that day Jesus says, "Saddle up. It's time." And then we'll fight with Jesus but we have no holy wars until that time, amen? Now, we will fight for our country because God has ordained governments and armies to punish evildoers and bless those who do good, Romans 13 says. That's a good and righteous thing we are to do.

Can I chase a rabbit for just a second? I had, there are some good man that I love dearly and it's not personal at all but I really disagree with a couple of positions that have been floating around out there on a couple of things that have been affecting our country lately. One of those positions is concerning self-defense with firearms and I know Dr. Piper wrote a long article where he's not dogmatic, he doesn't say it's sin either way, but he very heavily leans toward basically Christians should not own a weapon and should just surrender themselves to evildoers if they break into their home. I think Dr. Piper completely misses the Christian position. I think he completely misses the biblical foundation on that. On the other hand, I've seen some good brothers and, again, people who have preached in my pulpit so it's not a personal thing. You understand we can disagree and still love each other and still be good Christians, alright? But the notion of if you're a Christian you have to be for bringing all of these refugees in from countries where we know terrorists are infiltrating these groups and they'll say, "Well, if you're a Christian, you have to welcome these people in." No, listen, you may can call the government and say, "I welcome them in my house." If you'll take them in your house as a Christian and, again, that may vary Christian to Christian. That's your decision, but the government has a God-ordained responsibility to protect its own people and if the government believes there is too much of a problem here or a threat here, then it's the government's, not only their right, it's their responsibility to do what's necessary to

protect the people, Romans 13. This is not a, we are not a Christian nation in the sense that Christianity and the Christian church is a theocracy that rules the nation. We are a nation that allows freedom of religion so there is no authority for us to say since we are a Christian nation, we have to welcome anybody in that wants to come in. It's just a ridiculous notion and I think, I shouldn't say that because I know some of you probably agree with that. What I mean by that is I think people are very sincere and I appreciate that heart, but they are assuming a role God only gave to government authorities, not individual Christians. How does that sound? Are you with me there? That's a role God gave to the governing authorities, not to individual Christians and it's their job to know the details and call that decision and they are responsible to make a call based on what is best to protect the citizens.

So I don't see as a dereliction of Christian compassion to say, "No, we are not for bringing all these refugees over if there is a possibility that they're terrorists as a part of those groups." But we do have compassion and certainly there may be some within those that we would, if we could find them and know them, who know Christ, whatever, that we would gladly welcome, but there's a way to care for people like that without the threat of bringing them over here, providing a safe zone for them or whatever. So that's kind of chasing a rabbit but I've been wanting to say that for a while so I'll keep clinging to my guns and my Bible and whatever else we are supposed to be ignorant for clinging to and believing the government has a God-ordained, Bible-established role to protect its citizenry and we respect that.

Let me give one other thought there. If this is a government of the people, for the people, and by the people, and we've got the Second Amendment which says the people have a right to keep and bear arms, the government is also implying in that since you also have the right to do that to help the government in protecting yourself. Do you hear me? It's a government position that you're a part of the protection within the nation so, again, under Romans 13, there is a government provision for us if the government allows keeping and bearing arms individually, to have those arms if you choose to do so. If you choose not to, that's your decision. I don't think Christians should somehow feel bad about having firearms and protecting themselves.

Now, I have a pistol permit and I have carried it when I go to the deer camp. I usually always carry one, and I believe without exception every time I stick that gun in my belt and put my coat over it, I say, "God, I pray that I will never in any way have to use this, and I pray if there's a situation where I believe that I have to use it, that I could do it in a way that would cause the least harm to the other person." But I do believe there is a right and righteous way to defend yourself and your family and like many of you, if somebody breaks into my home, they'd better be really quick. I'm not going to ask questions. I'm going to defend my family in the name of the Father, and the Son, and Holy Spirit, alright?

One other quick thought. There is a balance where if there is severe persecution strictly for our faith, then the Scripture does give indication there are times to deliver yourself to martyrdom for the glory of God. Now, that's a little different than a guy just breaking in

on drugs because he wants to rape your wife and steal your stuff. But when specifically for your Christian witness you're called upon to give your life, then God will give you the grace to do so. Thank God we're not there, amen? But now, we have brothers and sisters around the world that are there right now. Right now.

Let's stand together in prayer.