

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

War, Violence and The Christian, Pt 4

Selected Passages

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: In light of the massive amount of violence occurring in Israel and the Gaza Strip, we take time to consider the source and causes of war and how does a Christian begin to approach a very complicated subject. Many opinions flow on this subject but not a lot of biblical thinking. We seek to begin to remedy this.

I. Introduction.

- A. Today I want to teach you another influential view on war.
- B. Summary of what we know:
 - 1. War is due to sin in this age.
 - 2. War is often driven by envy and selfishness.
 - 3. Inevitable.
 - 4. Violent and destructive.
 - 5. Long lasting.
 - 6. Harms non-combatants.
- C. Christians over the centuries have expressed various ways to think through war and violence.
 - 1. Often these are developed as situations arise in life that create questions.
 - 2. The current rise of post-millennialism and Christian Nationalism is nothing more than a reaction to current events going on in our nation. This is why people suddenly shed an entire theological framework like dirty socks and take up a new one that magically supports what they are currently thinking.
 - 3. Christianity was embraced by the Emperor of Rome, Constantine the First in the 4th century. Whether this was a true conversion to Jesus Christ or not is not something we can know for certain. However, what happened because of it was the weaving of the Church and the State together.
- D. When you look at the various ways that Christians have approached war over the last 2000 years you will find two basic positions will arise: *Activist and Pacifist.*

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1. We examined under the pacifist label a subgroup known as the doctrine of non-resistance. It has certain key arguments that shape its position.
 2. It is overtly commanded by Jesus.
 3. It is commanded by the Apostles.
 4. The Christian does not belong to this kingdom.
 5. The methods used by Christians are not of this age.
- E. Today we will look at one other key position under the banner of Pacifist and then one of two key positions under the banner of Activist.

II. How Christians approach the issue of war.

A. Pacifism:

1. The pacifist argues for a more active position even though it is called Pacifism. He is actively seeking to create peace wherever he finds himself.
2. To be a peacemaker. So, the negative is, “We don’t do violence and war.” The positive side is, “We pursue peace.”
3. Pacifism is not something we expect the people of this age or the governments to accept. As a result the pacifist tends to see that the government should be left to do what it deems best and let the church be free to work within society to promote peace.
4. So while the government is ordained by God it is NOT the final authority for a Christian.
 - a. Romans 13.
 - b. Acts 5:29 becomes a key passage to remember.
5. Many of the same passages will be used by the Pacifist that are used by the Non-Resistance position.
 - a. In reality this is also another example of how important your hermeneutic is to life.
 - b. There is the idea in Pacifism that we do not belong to this age and therefore we should not participate in the fruits of sin, one of which is war or violence. And when we refuse to participate, we should also seek to be a blessing of peace at the same time.
 - (1) So going back to the Sermon on the Mount, which is the key passage for this position as well, they make the

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argument that human life is more important than material goods. *“Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back”* (Luke 6:29-30).

- (2) Now, this is also a good example of application over meaning.
 - (3) Matthew 5:39, the words of Jesus are a bit more fully stated and are helpful.
 - (4) The same is in view of taking one’s cloak.
 - (5) Take the walking an extra mile when forced to go one mile.
- c. One other key position is that the believer belongs to a different kingdom and should limit their interactions with the kingdoms of this sinful age.
- (1) Colossians 1:13.
 - (2) The context makes it clear Paul is referring to the individual believers and the blessings that come from faith in Jesus Christ.
 - (3) In vs 12 we are told to be a people giving thanks to the Father in heaven.
 - (4) Then, in vs 13 the “for” gives us examples.
 - (5) So vs 14 speaks then of our redemption, the purchase of freedom out of our enslavement to sin and then the forgiveness of sin itself.
 - (6) But what is not discussed is how you are to live in this fallen age as a citizen.
6. Counter-arguments.
- a. The Non-resistance camp will usually see much agreement with the Pacifist camp but nonetheless they also give pushback.
 - (1) The primary argument is usually that the Christian is so radically transformed through Christ that he must refuse to be compelled by the government to do anything he thinks is wrong.

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- (2) Since they hold that any sort of resisting against evil is sin, then any involvement in pushing back against it is sin as well. It is interesting that the non-resistance group do believe in resisting when being told to fight.
 - (3) They also would argue that war and resistance will never achieve long term changes.
- b. Within the two Activist positions of preventative war and a just war certain points are given as pushback to the pacifist and non-resistance camps.
- (1) They agree that war is evil in the sense that it is a by-product of sin. But this is different than saying that the presence of evil is always sin.
 - (2) Example of this is in the Garden in Genesis 3.
 - (3) One of the biggest points made by the Activist camp is that these other two positions of non-resistance assume all life is always absolutely holy.
 - (4) Often the pushback against the Pacifist positions is nothing more than arguing that if you always choose peace you are not being realistic and it is a recipe for a life of subjugation and exploitation.
- c. When pushing back against these two positions many will say, “What about Israel? They were God’s people and they did much war.”
- (1) Some non-resistance and pacifists hold to a theological position called Dispensationalism which is the position of the leadership of this church. For them the answer is very simple—the Church and Israel are not the same. They are distinct sub-groups of God’s people.
 - (2) Israel is a nation. More than that, it is a unique nation and is still under God’s covenant promises through Abraham.
- d. What about other statements of Christ that seem to contradict the pacifist’s position?
- (1) Matthew 10:34.
 - (2) Luke. 22:35-38.

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7. Perhaps the biggest issue I have with the arguments for Non-Resistance and Pacifism is that they tend to try to elevate the words of Jesus in the gospels above the rest of the bible. This is simply wrong and fails to remember that all the of the bible is actually the words of Christ.
8. Finally, I would argue that these two positions do not adequately take into consideration the presence of sin and the God-given means to resist certain expressions of sin through physical force. Like many issues the pressure is to make things “either-or” when in reality it is more “both-and.”

III. Conclusion.

- A. Next week we will consider the two more aggressive positions that Christians take, the Preventative War and the Just War theories.
- B. But let me leave us today with a reminder that war and violence is part of the very fabric of this age we live in.
 1. Sin brought it into existence and only one who can conquer sin will ultimately resolve it.
 2. Part of the battle against these enemies was done with Jesus Christ being a Lamb.
 3. But this Lamb is also described as a lion—the Lion of Judah.
 4. This war that Jesus Christ shall wage war (Revelation 19:11-15).
 5. Isaiah 63:1-7 describes this event over a 1000 year prior to writing Revelation.
 6. Only through a holy war, which we are in even now, will all sin and injustice be ultimately abolished
 7. So as Christians let us be peace-makers. But also let us understand how peace is made and how it is kept. For in this age, violence is often the means to bring peace.

Benediction

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you always. May you rest in the power of the Holy Spirit and may you rejoice in the love of the Father as it flows to you in every moment and in every way. Amen.