



# Jesus & The Sword



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## Preface

Christians hold various perspectives on the use of **“The Sword”** – that is, employing the use of physical force against “evildoers” in various contexts of life here on this fallen planet, Earth. If one desires to arrive at a truly biblical perspective for oneself, it requires instruction from the Holy Spirit through a great deal of Scripture study. Citing just a few statements Jesus made was sufficient to convince me that arriving at a biblical perspective for oneself is needful, as both “evildoers” and the employment of physical force against them (whether deemed righteous or unrighteous) will be with us, and increasingly so, until Christ’s return to Earth:

**“You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.”** Matthew 24:6

**“Because lawlessness (“evil doing”) is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.”** Matthew 24:12

I think Bob Dylan succinctly summarized what Scripture indicates about the times prior to Christ’s return: ***“Will I ever learn **that there’ll be no peace, that the war won’t cease until He returns?**”***  
(*When He Returns*, “Slow Train Coming”, Bob Dylan, 1979)

In this article, I would like to firstly establish the context of the subject matter by mentioning some of *the major issues to be addressed and scriptures to be considered*. It is apparent that there is a tension between Jesus' commandment for His disciples to love their enemies, and biblical references indicating secular government's God-given role to exercise "the sword" against "evildoers"- both in law enforcement and in war. There are also questions concerning the biblical legitimacy of the "Just War" Theory, the use of force in personal self-defense, whether believers can or should not be in occupations of law enforcement and the military, as well as the question of any use of force disregarding and disobeying the Lord's statement, "Vengeance is mine."<sup>1</sup> While it seems to me that Jesus' teaching on "the sword" is essentially pacifist, there are some statements Jesus made concerning "the sword" which need deeper analysis.

I find it difficult to totally agree with any one theological perspective as I vary on some points due to differences in my understanding and perspective of some scripture passages. But by surveying the contrasting perspectives held by theologians who are much more educated than myself, I became convinced of the necessity of making a very comprehensive investigation of the subject

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 32:35 & Romans 12:19

matter. But the goal of this article is not to present detailed explanations along with the “pros and cons” of various theological perspectives. Rather, **my primary goal is to attempt to articulate my current personal perspective.**

I would hope that my personal perspective is based more in Scripture than in a particular theological system. After surveying Scripture along with seeking the instruction of the Holy Spirit, I humbly hold my current perspective based on “the faith which I have, I have as my own conviction before God”. (Romans 14:22) Hopefully, this is more than “my personal feelings” or “my personal opinion”. From my observation, it seems to me that many, if not most, Christians based their view on their personal feelings and opinions, which are influenced by the perceived safety or danger of the particular environment in which they live. So, I invite the reader to also consider anew *the major issues and related scriptures* surrounding this subject matter and arrive at your own personal perspective which you can hold as “the faith which you have, you have as your own conviction before God”.

# Sorting Out the Sword

## *Issues to be Addressed & Scriptures to be Considered*

So, let's list a number of issues related to **Jesus & The Sword** accompanied by scripture references which I believe relate to those issues. What distinguishes the various perspectives has to do with their perspectives on the following issues.

## Authority

Probably the root of all the issues surrounding “the sword” has to do with **authority**. Who has the authority to make decisions about the use of “the sword”?

Romans 13:1-7 is a passage which features significantly in this subject matter. For the moment, let's consider just verse one:

“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority<sup>2</sup> except from God, and those which exist are established by God.” (Romans 13:1)

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<sup>2</sup> Greek: exousia, Strong's # G1849. “1849 eksousía (from [1537](#) /ek, "out from," which intensifies [1510](#)/eimí, "to be, being as a right or privilege") – authority, conferred power; delegated empowerment ("authorization"), operating in a designated jurisdiction.”, Gary Hill and Archer L. Gleason, *Emphatic Language Pointer System* (Synonym Glossary, Discovery Bible, NASB New Testament) Moody Press (1987)

This verse confirms that human governments indeed have authority, but that authority is given by God. I understand the apostle Paul also implying that if some so-called “authority” given or claimed by human governments does not come from God, it is not actually legitimate authority. Therefore, the source of all authority – earthly and heavenly – is God. **Only God has the authority to make decisions about “the sword”.** To ignore this fact, is to claim authority which has not been given by God. More specifically, any decisions concerning “the sword” not in accord with God, are illegitimate. As Christians, our “North Star” or “Guiding Star” in the matter of “the sword” is not human government and civil authority. Nor is it our personal feelings and opinions. But rather, it is the authority and will of God as He has revealed in His written words.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Namely, the Canon of Scripture. See: [“The Bible: The Written Words of God”](#).

# Power

”<sup>1</sup>When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum. <sup>2</sup> And a centurion’s slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. <sup>3</sup> When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. <sup>4</sup> When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, ‘He is worthy for You to grant this to him; <sup>5</sup> for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.’ <sup>6</sup> Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, ‘Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; <sup>7</sup> for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup> For I also am a man placed under authority<sup>4</sup>, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.’ <sup>9</sup> Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, ‘I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.’ <sup>10</sup> When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.”

Luke 7:1-10 (Cf. Matthew 8:5-13)

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<sup>4</sup> Greek: exousia, Strong’s # G1849.

In this passage, we read of a Roman centurion who was a benefactor of the Jews<sup>5</sup>, most likely a “God-fearer”<sup>6</sup>, and one who recognized the God-given authority given to Jesus. He understood the nature of authority because he had been given civil authority over other human beings. But he also understood that the authority Jesus had was different – it was greater. It was spiritual authority. There is a great significance in the difference between the authority given to the centurion and the authority given to Jesus. That significance has to do with the very nature of the two: The centurion’s authority was used to punish “wrongdoers”.<sup>7</sup> Jesus’ authority was used to heal and redeem “wrongdoers”. Civil authority employs “the sword”.<sup>8</sup> **Spiritual authority employs the Cross of Christ Jesus.**

”<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. <sup>5</sup> *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, <sup>6</sup> and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

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<sup>5</sup> He built a synagogue for the Jews, Luke 7:5.

<sup>6</sup> An un-circumcised Gentile who followed the Jewish religion.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Romans 13:1-7

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Romans 13:1-7

Paul could not have made it more clear: Although our spirits have been regenerated, Christians still live in the physical world along with all unregenerated people. But our weapons are not the weapons of the unregenerated. They are spiritual weapons which address spiritual issues – specifically, spiritual “fortresses” constructed of “speculations”, “lofty things”, and “thoughts” being “raised up against the knowledge of God” by the “sons of disobedience”<sup>9</sup>. The God-ordained sphere of the Church (Ekklesia) is the spiritual sphere. Whereas the God-ordained sphere of the State to protect and punish is comprised of physical “flesh and blood” people, societies, and nations.

Both the apostles Paul and Peter hold this perspective<sup>10</sup> based on Jesus’ teaching:

**“Therefore, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”**

Matthew 21:22 ESV, Cf. Mark 12:17, Luke 20:25

It is important to note that according to Jesus’ teaching, civil law enforcement is in the sphere of “Caesar” – that is, the State. The God-given sphere of the Church (the Ekklesia) is the spiritual sphere; and the God-given sphere of the State is the physical sphere. Throughout history, when there has been amalgamations of those

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<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 2:2, 5:6; Colossians 3:6

<sup>10</sup> Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-14

two spheres, in time, human society has naturally reacted with protest. But more significantly, the Church (the Ekklesia) has become spiritually compromised and weakened in its witness and mission.

## “Love Your Enemies”

Jesus has much to say to His followers about loving their enemies, taking a non-violence stance, and being peacemakers:

“Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they shall be called sons of God.” Matthew 5:9

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, **do not resist an evil person**; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.” Matthew 5:38-39

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, **love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you.”  
Matthew 5:43–44, Cf. Luke 6:27–28, 35

The apostle Paul spoke likewise:

“<sup>17</sup> **Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.** Respect what is right in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, **be at peace with all men.** <sup>19</sup> **Never take your own revenge**, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.’ <sup>20</sup> ‘But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals

on his head.’<sup>11</sup> <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil but **overcome evil with good.**” Romans 12:17-21

“Love your enemies”; “Do not resist an evil person”; “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone”; “Never take your own revenge”; “Overcome evil with good”; “be at peace with all men”, be a peacemaker. It is difficult to not acknowledge that the predominant tone of Christ’s teaching and New Testament Christianity is pacifism.

Six times in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said: “You have heard that it was said ... but I say to you...”<sup>12</sup> Each time, He gave an example of how His interpretation of God’s law – and, in fact, the true meaning of God’s law - goes deeper than outward actions. “God looks at the heart.”<sup>13</sup> Sinful actions are rooted in and emerge from sinful thoughts, feelings, and intentions residing in the heart of fallen Humanity. Using “the sword” to “resist an evil person”, “pay back evil for evil”, and “take our own revenge” is a manifestation of the heart of fallen Humanity. It is “the law of sin at work in my members”.<sup>14</sup> We need to look to God to spiritually transform those thoughts, feelings, and intentions of the heart. But by an act of our will, we can choose to “love our enemies” and “overcome evil with good” by not using “the sword” in spite of those thoughts, feelings, and intentions.

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<sup>11</sup> Proverbs 25:21-22

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 5:21-28

<sup>13</sup> 1 Samuel 16:7

<sup>14</sup> Romans 7:23

As we continue to survey the issues and scripture passages related to **“Jesus and The Sword”**, and we find that according to Jesus and the written words of God the use of “the sword” may sometimes be “lawful” – both in civic law and God’s law – I think it very beneficial to always additionally consider the following verse:

“All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.”

1 Corinthians 10:23, Cf. 6:12

While at times we may have the “right” to use “the sword”, but can we work a better outcome – or leave room for God to work a better outcome – by our choosing to *not* use “the sword”?

## “Punish Evildoers”

Scripture informs us that God has ordained civil authorities to “punish evildoers” by use of “the sword”.

“<sup>1</sup>Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. <sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; <sup>4</sup> for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; **for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.** <sup>5</sup> Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience’ sake. <sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. <sup>7</sup> Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.” Romans 13:1-7

“<sup>13</sup>Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, <sup>14</sup>or to governors as sent by him **for the punishment of evildoers** and the praise of those who do right.” 1 Peter 2:13-14

Both Paul and Peter hold this perspective based on Jesus' teaching:

**“Therefore, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”**

Matthew 21:22 ESV, Cf. Mark 12:17, Luke 20:25

Again, it is important to note that according to Jesus' teaching, law enforcement was in the sphere of “Caesar” – that is, the Roman state.

In 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism, along with the Roman state, there was the Sanhedrin officers and temple guards which enforced Jewish laws and employed “the sword” when deemed necessary. However, Jesus introduced a very new perspective which relegated civil law enforcement to the state and not to the Church (Ekklesia) of His followers.<sup>15</sup>

Christian governing bodies replacing the Jewish Sanhedrin were the Apostolic council,<sup>16</sup> the presbytery in local expressions of the Church,<sup>17</sup> and later, Church

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<sup>15</sup> That is, unlike Old Testament Judaism, Christ followers lived in a non-sacral society – namely, “in the world, but not of the world” (John 17:14-16). For further understanding sacral and non-sacral societies, consult the writings of Leonard Verduin, *“The Reformers and Their Stepchildren”* and *“The Anatomy of a Hybrid”*, also the writings of sociologists Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Mircea Eliade, and Peter Burger,

<sup>16</sup> Acts 15

<sup>17</sup> Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 2:13-17, 5:1-5

councils.<sup>18</sup> These Christian governing bodies did not employ “the sword”, because the nature of their authority was different – it was spiritual rather than civil. It wasn’t until the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when Christianity became a “state religion” akin to the sacral society of Old Testament Judaism that the Church took up “the sword”.

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<sup>18</sup> For example, the Council of Nicaea (325 AD) and the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD).

## Christian Cops & Soldiers?

As was just mentioned, swords and other weapons (like clubs) were used by Roman soldiers, and also by Jews – the temple guards and Sanhedrin officers of the chief priests and elders.<sup>19</sup> To carry out their occupations of law enforcement, Roman and Jewish men would employ “the sword”. From a Christian perspective, such civil law enforcement would be in accord with Romans 13:1-7 – specifically, to “punish the evil doer”. But there is the question: In light of the teaching of Jesus, would followers of Christ occupy such “Romans 13 occupations”? Or would such occupations be reserved only for non-believers? Let’s investigate this question further:

“Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, ‘And what about us, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, ‘**Do not take money from anyone by force**, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages.’” Luke 3:14

It is interesting that these non-Jewish soldiers were asking questions of John the Baptist. If they were to covert to Judaism, they would have been labeled “God-fearers”.<sup>20</sup> “God-fearers” were gentiles drawn to

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<sup>19</sup> Matthew 26:47; Mark 14:43; Luke 22:52; John 18:10.

<sup>20</sup> Acts 10:2, 22; 13:16, 26

Judaism, the worship of the God of Israel, and attendance at synagogue meetings. But they were not considered full Jews unless they also submitted to circumcision, baptism, and the whole of the Mosaic Law.

But in any case, no one in the situation cited above were yet followers of Jesus. John the Baptist – the last of the Old Covenant prophets calling the Jewish nation to repentance - did not tell the Roman soldiers to leave the military. He told them not to use the force that had been given to them to take money from people.

We also don't have any instance recorded in the New Testament scriptures with Jesus or the apostles telling soldiers or law enforcement officers they must leave the military or their law enforcement occupations before they could become followers of Jesus.<sup>21</sup>

However, we do see such prohibitions in Early Church writings<sup>22</sup> concerning certain occupations. I think this fact carries significance in that it is a historical record of Early Church practice. Those early writings are not in

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 3:14; Acts 10 (Cornelius, a Roman centurion).

<sup>22</sup> *The Apostolic Tradition*, Hippolytus (3<sup>rd</sup> century); *The Soldier's Crown*, Tertullian (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries); *Divine Institutes*, Lactantius. Also: A highly respected source is George Kalantzis' *"Caesar and the Lamb"*, Early Christian Attitudes on War and Military Service, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2025, Wipf and Stock Publishers.

the Canon of Scripture but rather theological interpretations of the teaching of Christ – religious practice based on their understanding, interpretation, and application of Scripture: Before being baptized, catechumens employed in occupations involving violence such as gladiators and executioners were required to leave their professions. And those who were soldiers were required to plead what today we call “conscientious objection”, or alternatively, leave the military before being baptized.

Some thoughts on “conscientious objection”:

While these figures are subject to change, currently there are 195 nations in the world. 37 of those nations currently have enforced military conscription (draft) in which conscientious objection is an option.<sup>23</sup> So, 158 nations have a volunteer military in which conscientious objection is not an issue.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, in most nations of the world participation in war is a personal choice. Even conscientious objection is a choice to participate in a war albeit in a non-violent way. But still, this is a choice to support a war - rather than face imprisonment. So, at this point I bring up the

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. CIA World Factbook, Council on Foreign Relations, War Resisters International, Amnesty International.

<sup>24</sup> Of course, countries do change from a volunteer military policy to an enforced conscription policy under fear or threat of invasion. The USA would be just one example of this.

possibility of facing imprisonment for one's faith in Christ. Are we to renounce our faith in Christ to avoid imprisonment? Of course not. Yet when offered the option, many Christians support a war by participating as a conscientious objector in order to avoid imprisonment for refusing to support the war with their participation. In this light, it seems to me conscientious objection is a choice of convenience rather than taking a stance based on one's faith in Christ.

So, I again present the question: *If an authentic follower of Christ has pacifist leanings, does he belong in a military or law enforcement occupation?*

We will consider the issues of law enforcement and personal self-defense shortly. But regarding war, there is, of course, another scenario: A Christian supporting and participating in war – be it “carrying a sword” or “not carrying a sword” on the basis of that war being deemed a “Just War” and legitimate defense of one's country and loved ones.

# “Just War” Theory

The commonly accepted “Just War” Theory developed over centuries by Cicero in ancient Rome, Augustine of Hippo in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, Thomas Aquinas in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and Francisco Vitoria and Hugo Grotius in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The accepted basic tenants of the theory are:

It may be considered “just” in going to war (*“Jus ad bellum”*) if it has:

- 1) a “Just Cause”
- 2) a “Declaration by Legitimate Authority”
- 3) a “Right Intention”
- 4) a “Last Resort”
- 5) “Proportionality”<sup>25</sup>
- 6) a “Reasonable Chance of Success”

And conduct in war is “just” (*“Jus in bello”*) if it employs:

- 1) “Discrimination”<sup>26</sup>
- 2) “Military Necessity” and “Proportionality”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> It is argued that the anticipated benefits of going to war must justify the anticipated costs in terms of destruction, suffering, and deaths.

<sup>26</sup> It is argued that in warfare there must be a distinguishing between combatants and civilians.

<sup>27</sup> It is argued that the goals of the war must be accomplished without using excessive military force causing unnecessary destruction, suffering, and deaths.

### 3) “Prohibition of Evil Means”

Personally, I find the terms that I have placed in quotation marks extremely subjective in nature, defying any useful definition. For example, the concept of “Proportionality” in war: In an effort to achieve their goals, how can either side insure “limits” on the destruction, suffering, and deaths caused by war? Another example, the idea of “Discrimination” in war: The reality is that neither side has the ability to guarantee there will be no harm done to civilians.

“<sup>1</sup> What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? <sup>2</sup> You lust and do not have; so, you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so, you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.” James 4:1-3

*“It is what it is”*: War is by nature an evil which can never produce a convincing “good” outcome. I find the “Just War” Theory highly questionable – both as a theory and as a practice. It is not grounded in Scripture; nor is it even a sound philosophical argument.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For further discussion of the “Just War” Theory: “*City of God*”, Augustine of Hippo; “*Summa Theologica*”, Thomas Aquinas; “*On the Law of War and Peace*”, Hugo Grotius; and the “*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*”.

Nevertheless, it seems that most people consider the “Just War” Theory to be somewhat a deterrent to violence. However, historically it has also proven to be an encouragement for violence. For example: “Just War” morphed in “Holy War” with the Crusades.<sup>29</sup>

A related issue is the sacralization of the powers of the State - including law enforcement and military powers – which is a misunderstanding and a misrepresentation of the Kingdom of God. An obvious example would be “Christian Nationalism”<sup>30</sup> which conflates political and military activity with Church and Kingdom activity. This often leads to an illegitimate use of force. I will not be discussing such movements any further in this article, as I have addressed various issues relating to these things in other writings.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Recommended reading: *“Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations”* by Michael Walzer. <https://www.amazon.com/Just-Unjust-Wars-Historical-Illustrations/dp/0465052711>

<sup>30</sup> As well as other movements such as Seven Mountain Mandate, Kingdom Now, NAR, which may also possibly lead to illegitimate use of force by the Church.

<sup>31</sup> See: [“Governing Humanity”](#), [“Politicized Christendom”](#), [“The Cross & The Eternal Purpose of God”](#), [“The Cross & The Powers of Darkness”](#), [“Do Not Be Entangled”](#), [“Seeing the Kingdom Through the Cross”](#), [“Swift is the Plunder, Speedy is the Prey”](#), [“Your Kingdom Come”](#).

# Law Enforcement

Unlike the “Just War” Theory, the idea of using “the sword” in law enforcement is firmly rooted in Scripture:

“<sup>1</sup>Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. <sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; <sup>4</sup> for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear **the sword** for nothing; for **it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.** <sup>5</sup> Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience’ sake. <sup>6</sup> For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. <sup>7</sup> Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.” Romans 13:1-7

Possibly because this passage clearly states, “the sword” is to be used against “evildoers”, most Christians have probably not even considered the view that maybe followers of Christ do not belong in law

enforcement occupations. Again, that view is not specified in this scripture passage, but was held and practiced by the Early Church.

If Christians are employed in law enforcement, sooner or later they will be in the situation of using deadly force with a lethal weapon. Police are trained to *“shoot to stop the threat”* rather than *“shoot to kill”*. However, because of the authorization of the use of deadly force if there is *“reasonable belief that the subject poses an imminent danger of death or serious physical injury”*, the aim at *“center mass”* very often results in death.<sup>32</sup> A Christian in law enforcement is aware of this probability. While it may be argued that a law enforcement officer is exercising legitimate self-defense in these situations, it must also be noted that the simple fact that being employed as a law enforcement officer is intentionally placing oneself in these situations where the use of deadly force with a lethal weapon will need to be used in self-defense - in other words, intentionally *“placing oneself in harm’s way”*. For a law enforcement officer, the use of deadly force with a lethal weapon is not a choice – it *“comes with the job”*. Therefore, I think the question of whether a follower of Christ should choose to be employed in law enforcement, is at the very least a legitimate question to consider.

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. [Department of Justice](#), [FBI](#), [Police Executive Research Forum](#), [National Policing Institute](#), [Police1](#).

## Legitimate Self Defense

The issue of owning and using a weapon for personal self-defense is clearly found touching into the lives of all Christians. Even those who have not yet formed opinions on the other issues being reviewed here have made solid decisions about the use of a weapon in self-defense. Whether it is clearly based in Scripture, or making a questionable interpretation of a verse of scripture, or just an honest, “gut level” decision to use a weapon for self-defense, in my personal experience, I have found that most all Christians have a ready answer to the question: “*Would you use a weapon to defend yourself and your loved ones?*” Most – not all, but most - Christians answer in the affirmative.

”<sup>20</sup> But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. <sup>21</sup> When a strong *man*, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. <sup>22</sup> But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder.”

Luke 11:20-22

In the passage cited above, the larger context (VV.14-26) is clearly about spiritual warfare – specifically, casting out demons by the finger of God in demonstration of the

kingdom of God". (v. 20) In v. 21, Jesus used a parabolic illustration about a "strong man fully armed guarding his house", and "One who is stronger overpowering him." The "strong man" in this case is Satan, and the "One who is stronger" is the Lord. But some people extrapolate the phrase of someone "fully armed guarding his house" as a scriptural basis for legitimate self-defense with a deadly weapon. Possibly the fact that Jesus draws on that image to make a point means it is familiar and conventional thing to do. However, there is no direct sanctioning by Jesus of guarding one's house "fully armed". And clearly the whole passage is not about defending one's household with deadly weapons.

Another "questionable interpretation of a verse of scripture" which I referred to is this:

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Timothy 5:8)

This is put forward as the responsibility of a Christian to demonstrate love for his loved ones by owning and using a weapon, if necessary, to protect his household from harm. While that may be the right thing to do, it is a misinterpretation of this verse that is being used to support the decision. In the whole of 1 Timothy 5, there is no mention or even an inference to protection in self-defense, but rather material provision.

However, I do believe a case can be made from Scripture for the use of a weapon in self-defense:

**“Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave’s name was Malchus. So, Jesus said to Peter, ‘Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?’”** John 18:10-11, Cf. Matthew 26:51-52, Mark 14:47, Luke 22:51-52

Here we see that Peter carried a sword. Most likely, he had been carrying the sword all the while he had been following Jesus (between two to three years). There is no mention in the gospels of Jesus telling Peter he should not carry a sword for self-defense prior to this incident in the Garden of Gethsemane. Another passage in Luke’s gospel gives us some additional information:

<sup>35</sup> And He said to them, ‘When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?’ They said, ‘No, nothing.’ <sup>36</sup> And He said to them, ‘But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and *whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one.* <sup>37</sup> For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, ‘And He was numbered with transgressors’; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment.’ <sup>38</sup> They said, ‘Lord, look, here are **two swords.**’ And He said to them, ‘It is enough.’” Luke 22:35-38

The scene cited above took place prior to the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is telling the disciples, “**whoever** has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one”. The disciples told Jesus, they had “two swords”, indicating that Peter was not the only disciple who carried a sword for self-defense.

Based on these passages, it seems clear Jesus was not against carrying a sword for self-defense.

Something for further consideration in Mathew’s narration of the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane:

“<sup>51</sup>And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. <sup>52</sup> Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. <sup>53</sup> Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? <sup>54</sup> How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?’”

Matthew 26:51-54

Jesus told His disciple to “put your sword back into its place”. Jesus gave His primary reason for saying this: He said His Father was more than able to defend Him with “twelve legions of angels”, but what was taking place with

the arrest leading to the crucifixion was “the Scriptures being fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way”.<sup>33</sup>

However, Jesus also said, “all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword”. Was this a contradiction – forbidding the use of a sword in self-defense? I don’t believe so. Jesus used a proverb which points out that aggression most often begets aggression. Using a weapon against others may lead to a weapon being used against oneself. If one initiates violence, you may meet with a violent end.

Let’s consider a scenario of someone breaking into your house: If you immediately respond to the breaking in with the use of a weapon, it will most certainly be met with the use of the “evil doer’s” weapon. Whereas, if the break in is for robbery and not murder, the criminal *may not* use his weapon. I understand there are no guarantees regarding the behavior of “evildoers”. But cooperating with the criminal may result in a better outcome for everyone. Jesus actually instructed us to cooperate with an “evil doer”:

“<sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.”

Luke 6:29-30

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. V. 56

Also, in the Garden of Gethsemane scenario: Those coming to arrest Jesus did have “swords and clubs”,<sup>34</sup> but they were not being used. It was the disciple who initiated the violence with his sword. Actual self-defense is significantly different from initiating the use of weapons. Self-defense is a response to violence which has been initiated against you. Further, the response of self-defense is also significantly different from a response of vengeance.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. VV. 47, 55

## “Vengeance is Mine”

Again, self-defense is a response to violence which has been initiated against us. I believe it is true to say that when there is a violent response to violence, destruction, suffering, and death are multiplied. This is particularly true in the context of “nation against nation”: Young men are conscripted into war, sent into battle, destruction and killing ensue, not sparing innocent civilians including children. I truly believe that it defies reality to think that any war achieves “good”. I find it very difficult to identify with slogans about the “*cost of liberty*” and “*peace through strength*”, et. al. That view of “peace and liberty” necessitates gaining, increasing, and maintaining various forms of power. Admittedly, this is the case in our fallen world. But, as Christians, we are “in the world, but not of the world”<sup>35</sup> – “Our citizenship is in heaven”<sup>36</sup> – because our God’s kingdom “is not of this realm”<sup>37</sup>. In other words, I can understand that concepts like “*the cost of liberty*” and “*peace through strength*” making sense to unregenerate non-believers. But I can’t understand it making sense to regenerate followers of Christ.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> John 17:11-16

<sup>36</sup> Philippians 3:20

<sup>37</sup> John 18:36; Cf. Romans 14:17

<sup>38</sup> John 3:3-7

Responding to violence with more violence is not our only option. There is another option to choose: Leave the response to the Lord.

I was impacted by something Richard Foster said about the Discipline of Silence.<sup>39</sup> He said something to the effect that often we feel we must speak out in defense of ourselves - to “*set the record straight*”. He pointed out that this may belie a lack of faith in God to “*set the record straight*” on our behalf.

This was Jesus’ example: “ ... and while being reviled, **He did not revile in return**; while suffering, He uttered no threats but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.” (1 Peter 2:23; Cf. Isaiah 53:7) In the same way, when violence is initiated towards us, a violent response is not our only option. We can “**entrust ourself to Him who judges righteously**”.

As the apostle Paul exhorted:

<sup>17</sup> **Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.** Respect what is right in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. <sup>19</sup> **Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God,** for it is written, ‘*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*’ says the Lord.’  
<sup>20</sup> But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty,

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<sup>39</sup> In his book, “*The Celebration of Discipline*”

give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. <sup>21</sup> **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**” Romans 12:17-21<sup>40</sup>

I understand and openly admit that Paul’s exhortation is both un-natural and seemingly unpleasant. But, as followers of Christ, do we truly have options which are contrary to the clear and simple teaching of Christ?

“<sup>38</sup>You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup> But I say to you, **do not resist an evil person**; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. <sup>40</sup> If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. <sup>41</sup> Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. <sup>42</sup> Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. <sup>43</sup> You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, **love your enemies**<sup>41</sup> and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? <sup>48</sup> Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:38-48

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Proverbs 20:22, 24:29. Also: Deuteronomy 32:35; Psalm 94:1-2; Nahum 1:2-3; Hebrews 10:30; 1 Peter 3:9.

<sup>41</sup> Love is not a feeling. Love is not sinning against another. Love is obedience to Christ’s commandments. 1 John 5:3; 2 John 1:6; Cf. 1 John 2:3-5, 3:22-24.

# **A Survey of Christian Friends**

Before writing this article, I conducted a brief survey of Christians on my ministry Email list. I received 30 responses to the following questions from friends around the USA, Canada, New Zealand, India, and various African countries, including responses from 4 women:

## **1) Are you a total pacifist?**

20 % answered "Yes". And 80% answered "No."

## **2) Would you own a weapon for defending yourself and your loved ones?**

80 % answered "Yes". And 20 % answered "No."

## **3) Would you ever participate in a war you were convinced threatened the security of the country where you and your loved ones live?**

70 % answered "Yes". And 30 % answered "No."

## **4) Do you think it is OK for Christians to be in civil law enforcement?**

90 % answered "Yes". And 10 % answered "No."

## My Perspective

My personal responses to the questions cited above:

**1) Are you a total pacifist? – Yes.**

**2) Would you own a weapon for defending yourself and your loved ones? – No.**

**3) Would you ever participate in a war you were convinced threatened the security of the country where you and your loved ones live? – No.**

**4) Do you think it is OK for Christians to be in civil law enforcement? - No.**

Rather than don a particular theological label, I will describe my views on each of the particular issues discussed in this article.

### *Authority*

I believe the nature of the authority that God has given to the Church (Ekklesia) is spiritual authority – having to do with the things of God – things pertaining to the Kingdom of Heaven. God has given civil authority to the State. Civil authority has to do with the things of

this world system – things pertaining to society at large which is comprised of a majority of unregenerated people.

Obviously, as Jesus said, His followers are “in this world” and therefore like all human beings we will have interest in civil issues as they affect our lives.

Worldview – be it a biblical worldview or a non-biblical worldview will obviously affect perspectives on civil issues.<sup>42</sup>

However, the Body of Christ - the Church, the Ekklesia which is called out of the world - *as a collective entity* should remain separate from governing civil affairs,<sup>43</sup> and the State (civil government) should remain separate from governing in the spiritual affairs of the Ekklesia.

## *Power*

I believe the nature of the power that God has given to the Church (the Ekklesia) is spiritual power – having to do with the regeneration of the human spirit<sup>44</sup> – passing

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<sup>42</sup> For further reading on these issues: [“Governing Humanity”](#).

<sup>43</sup> This is a very succinct statement. It is not within the scope of this article to discuss these issues in detail. However, I do see these issues as having utmost importance as to what is and what is not the calling of the Church (the Ekklesia). So, again I suggest further reading on these issues. I have written at length on these things in [“Governing Humanity”](#).

<sup>44</sup> John 3:3-8

from death to life<sup>45</sup>, from darkness to light<sup>46</sup>, from the lie to the truth which is in Jesus<sup>47</sup>, all by virtue of the spiritual realities of the gospel concerning His death, burial, and resurrection.<sup>48</sup> God has given civil power to the State. Civil power has to do with protecting society at large and punishing “evildoers”.

### *“Love Your Enemies”*

I observe that I can be “generous” at times, but I am not a “kind” person by nature. (My wife is very kind by nature, so I can often make a comparison.) It seems like “resistance”, “retaliation”, and “revenge” are in my DNA - my “default mode” response to personal conflict – particularly when dealing with “the world outside” in my everyday life situations. (Sicilian “pay back”?)

But at the same time, I am attracted to and desire to rather choose these responses found in the teachings of Christ: “Love your enemies”; “Do not resist an evil person”; “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone”; “Never take your own revenge”; “Overcome evil with good”; “be at peace with all men”, be a peacemaker.

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<sup>45</sup> John 5:24; 1 John 3:14; Cf. Ephesians 2:4-5; Colossians 2:13; Romans 6:13

<sup>46</sup> John 12:46; Acta 26:18; Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9

<sup>47</sup> Ephesians 4:21b; John 14:6; Cf. John 1:14, 17; 8:31-32

<sup>48</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

So, with regards to “the sword” and “loving my enemies”, I am with the apostle Paul:

“<sup>14</sup> For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. <sup>15</sup> For what I am doing, I do not understand; for **I am not practicing what I would like to do**, but I am doing the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. <sup>17</sup> So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. <sup>19</sup> For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. <sup>20</sup> But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. <sup>21</sup> I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. <sup>22</sup> For **I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man**, <sup>23</sup> but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. <sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. <sup>1</sup> Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” Romans 7:14-8:2

I am not yet very close at all to “loving my enemies”. But I have found in relating to my loved ones, it is possible to

“override” the negative thoughts, feelings, and intentions in my heart by an act of my will. I am finding the power of the human will in this case to be quite surprising. Love is not a feeling. It is a decision. It is often simply choosing to not sin against the other person. I am learning to do this with my loved ones. I believe I can learn to do that with “my enemies”.

### *“Punish Evildoers”*

Starting with Jesus’ statement (Matthew 21:22 ESV, Cf. Mark 12:17, Luke 20:25) and followed up by Paul’s (Romans 13:1-7) and Peter’s (1 Peter 2:13-14) statements, it is quite clear that God has ordained civil authorities to protect people and “punish evildoers” by use of “the sword”. The Church (the Ekklesia) of Christ followers is not commissioned by God to “punish evildoers” by use of “the sword”.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> That is, unlike Old Testament Judaism, Christ followers lived in a non-sacral society – namely, “in the world, but not of the world” (John 17:14-16). For further understanding sacral and non-sacral societies, consult the writings of Leonard Verduin, *“The Reformers and Their Stepchildren”* and *“The Anatomy of a Hybrid”*, also the writings of sociologists Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Mircea Eliade, and Peter Burger,

## *Christian Cops & Soldiers?*

From my perspective, civil governments, authorities, and officers of law enforcement and the military are “the things belonging to Caesar”. As a follower of Christ “seeking first **the kingdom of God and His righteousness**”, I identify as a “disciple of the kingdom”.<sup>50</sup> Although I am “in the world” – my “citizenship is in heaven”.<sup>51</sup> I do not identify as a “civil servant”, because I am “not **of** the world”.

While the occupations of law enforcement and the military serve the purpose of protection and punishment in our fallen world, I do not comprehend why followers of Christ would identify with, dedicated themselves to, or desire to be employed in those occupations – especially since those occupations are required to exercise violence. “*Peace through strength*” is an “elementary principle of the world”<sup>52</sup> – not the way of the Prince of Peace.

People who are yet unregenerated live according to “the letter of the law” - as in the Old Covenant.<sup>53</sup> People who have been regenerated live “according to the Spirit” – that

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<sup>50</sup> Matthew 13:52

<sup>51</sup> Philippians 3:20

<sup>52</sup> Galatians 4:3, 9; Colossians 2:8, 20.

<sup>53</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:6

is, according to the New Covenant<sup>54</sup> - by “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”.<sup>55</sup> **I believe God has designated the occupations of law enforcement and the military to those who are not yet unregenerated – not to the regenerated followers of Christ.** There are plenty of unregenerated people to cover those occupations employing “the sword” in our fallen world. Those who are regenerated should be dedicating themselves, their time, and energies to the “things belonging to God”, rather than the “things belonging to Caesar”.

“<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 12:1-2

## *“Just War” Theory*

As I stated earlier in this article, war is by nature an evil which can never produce a convincing “good” outcome. I find the “Just War” Theory highly questionable – both as a theory and as a practice. It is not grounded in Scripture; nor is it even a sound philosophical argument. The tenants of the “Just War”

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<sup>54</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:6

<sup>55</sup> Romans 8:2

Theory are subjective in nature, defying any useful definition. The ideas of “proportionality” and “discrimination” in warfare are essentially idealistic and amount to being no more than political tools for media to manipulate public opinion regarding either economic aid or sanctions as additional weapons in the warfare.

I am not at all convinced that any wars have been fought for the “*preservation of democracy*” or any other humanitarian ideal. There always have been – and there still are – places in the world where there is some form of a humanitarian crisis taking place because of the political and/or economic greed of an invading terrorist group or an aggressive nation. Often, these situations are not even covered by news media. When possible, there may be involvement by “relief organizations”. But actual physical involvement by other nations to put an end to the injustices is missing because there is little or no economic value to getting involved.

I believe when nations are involved in wars – directly or indirectly – it is because those nations have some degree of economic and material power; and are at war in order to increase, or at least protect and maintain, their economic and material power. Nations form alliances, not because of shared ideals, but because of shared economic and material well-being.

In our fallen world, defense mechanisms regarding invasion of land, sea, air, and cyberspace are necessary. But there is no “just” reason to attack another nation in because that nation has voiced threats or appears to be threatening to attack. Admittedly, nuclear armament by known terrorist nations is a clear and immanent danger. But the solution is not *“Peace through strength.”* – in other words, a nation or nations building up their nuclear armaments to discourage the use of nuclear armaments by other nations.

To be completely honest, I don’t believe there is a human solution to preventing war in our fallen world, any more than there is a human solution to preventing hatred, jealousy, envy, or greed. (Cf. James 4:1-3)

## *Law Enforcement*

Unlike the “Just War “Theory, the idea of using “the sword” in law enforcement is firmly rooted in Scripture. (Cf. Romans 13:1-7) However, can a regenerated follower of Christ, walking in the New Covenant, conceive of being led by “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” to intentionally place himself in situations daily where the use of deadly force with a lethal weapon *“comes with the job”*? I believe God has designated the occupation of law enforcement to those who are unregenerated – not to regenerated followers of Christ.

## *Legitimate Self-Defense*

I believe a legitimate case can be made from Scripture for the use of a weapon in self-defense. As discussed earlier in the article, when Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples just prior to His arrest, He told them to carry swords for self-defense. They already had two swords among themselves at that time. Obviously, Jesus was aware of that. Then, when they had gone out to the Garden of Gethsemane after the supper, Peter having a sword, used it against a slave of the high priest. Jesus told His disciple, “Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:10-11; Cf. Matthew 26:51-52, Mark 14:47, Luke 22:35-38, 51-52) This was Jesus’ way of saying, *“Don’t resist this evil. For this must take place to fulfill prophecy and My Father’s plan of redemption through My arrest, death, burial, and resurrection.”*<sup>56</sup>

While Matthew’s record has Jesus saying, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.” (Matthew 26:52), that verse should not be separated from the following verses: “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, *which say that it must happen this way?*” Matthew 26:53-54 Jesus was telling

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<sup>56</sup> Isaiah 53:7-8, Cf. Matthew 26:63, 27:12-14; Zechariah 13:7, Cf. Matthew 26:31, Mark 14:27; Psalm 41:9, Cf. Matthew 26:14-16, 47-50.

His disciple that God's ways are not the ways of Mankind.<sup>57</sup> God had a plan of redemption which no one yet understood except Jesus Himself. It would be "the weakness of God" that would accomplish redemption through the Cross of Christ.<sup>58</sup> The force of God's power is essentially different from the force of the "fleshly weapons" used by Mankind.<sup>59</sup>

Today, when people think of a weapon for self-defense, it is almost always a firearm which comes to mind. A firearm is a lethal weapon. The research I cited earlier in the article indicates the use of a firearm in self-defense very often results in a death rather than just a wound – particularly in response to an intense and threatening situation in a public place.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, according to [Pew Research Center](#) and [Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions](#), less than 1.5% of firearm deaths occur in law enforcement – the other 98.5% are the results of homicide (35%), suicide (62%), and accidents (1.5%).<sup>61</sup>

I have never owned a firearm, and I am reasonably certain I never will. My reason is this: I think they are dangerous even while not being used against an

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<sup>57</sup> Isaiah 55:8-9

<sup>58</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:25; Colossians 2:15

<sup>59</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

<sup>60</sup> Cf. [Department of Justice](#), [FBI](#), [Police Executive Research Forum](#), [National Policing Institute](#), [Police1](#).

<sup>61</sup> 2024 figures in the USA.

assailant. Examples of their danger: accidental injury, domestic violence, homicide, suicide, attraction for home invasion for theft of firearms. Best practices for firearm safety like keeping firearms in a locked cabinet, unloaded, keeping ammunition in a separate place, etc. all make good sense, but are time-consuming impediments when a home invasion is actually taking place.

So, while owning and using a weapon for self-defense may be legitimate for a follower of Christ, in this case I choose a pacifist strategy for self-defense – namely, non-threatening behavior, verbal de-escalation, and co-operation. Preparation in defense of a home invasion: security cameras, motion-detectors, an alarm system, a dog, a way of escape, a locked-room barrier, call 911, and if necessary, non-threatening behavior, verbal de-escalation, and co-operation.

### *“Vengeance is Mine”*

Self-defense is a response to violence which has been initiated against us – and this may be a legitimate response. However, I believe it is true to say that when there is a violent response to violence, destruction, suffering, and death are multiplied.

When violence is initiated towards us, a violent response is not our only option. We can “entrust ourself to Him who judges righteously”<sup>62</sup> and leave the response to the Lord.

That may not be the way of the world; and it may not be the way which seems so very natural and “fair” to ourselves; but it is the way of Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:38-48) and His apostles (Romans 12:17-21 & 1 Peter 2:23).

I believe, as followers of Christ, we need to become better at learning to “leave room for the wrath of God”.<sup>63</sup> It really just comes down to a matter of faith: Are we going to learn to utterly depend and lean upon God – or continue to put our trust in ourselves and our “swords”?

“Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed.  
He will answer him from his holy heaven  
with the saving might of his right hand.  
Some trust in chariots and some in horses,  
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.”  
Psalm 20:6-7 *ESV*

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<sup>62</sup> 1 Peter 2:23

<sup>63</sup> Romans 12:19; Cf. Deuteronomy 32:35; Psalm 94:1.

# Addendum

## *Recreational Firearm Sports*

This Addendum serves as an extension of My Perspective but has not been included in the main body of this article as it addresses the subject of weapons which are not used against other human beings but rather against animals and inanimate objects as in recreational firearm sports.

As a non-participant, I don't have much to say about recreational firearm sports. I'm certain that recreational firearm sport enthusiasts would therefore evaluate my comments as having little credibility or value. Nevertheless, I feel that I need to present my view on this topic as it is an aspect of the larger subject matter of "the sword".

Recreational shooting sports emerged from human beings hunting animals for food, and a little later, from human beings conducting warfare. Along with hunting, there is a long list of the various recreational shooting sports, each based on various types of firearms.

With the exception of “Big Game Hunting”, hunters may process and enjoy eating their kill. However, I think it accurate to say that hunting animals for food is not the necessity it was originally. I will acknowledge that hunting game for food does result in a financial savings. But with a few exceptions, I don’t believe that is the primary reason most hunters hunt. Therefore, generally speaking, I would categorize it as a recreational shooting sport, as well.

While attending college, I took a one-semester gym course in archery. It was simple “target practice” rather than developing bow and arrow hunting skills. I enjoyed the course. I thought it would be fun to own a bow and arrows, but I really never “pulled it out of the closet” for recreation. I don’t remember what I did with it, but after a while I no longer owned it. The bow and arrows never came close to reaching the status of my involvement in the sports of football and baseball in my childhood. As a young man, performing music replaced sports as a pastime - and also became a profession for about 60 years.

At the risk of offending a lot of people, my personal impression is that there may be a similarity between many who engage in playing music and those who engage in recreational shooting sports. And that similarity is this: *“Making believe you’re a professional”*.

Whether in their youth or later in life, many who “play in a band” as a pastime enjoy the feeling of “being a professional musician” – if only for a moment and then go back to the relative humdrum of “real life”, so to speak. I think it’s similar with those who engage in shooting sports: For a moment, they can enjoy the feeling of playing “Cowboys and Indians” or “Cops and Robbers”, while not being in the professions of law enforcement or military. I think there may be the same phenomenon with hunters feeling a little like Daniel Boone, or Davy Crockett, or Buffalo Bill Cody, so to speak.

So, is any of that “sinful” or “evil”? No. But I believe it carries all the dangers of owning and using firearms which I’ve mentioned earlier in this article.<sup>64</sup> I suppose all sports entail a certain level of danger on a scale from playing chess to rock-face climbing, or from movie-watching to alpine-skiing. Now the number of injuries in the various shooting sports may be low, but again, it is the dangers of firearms in the home which is of concern to me.

Probably of even more concern is the fact that the way we recreate reflects the nature of a person and his surrounding culture. Take for an example the sports of Paintball and Airsoft: We aren’t actually killing people

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<sup>64</sup> “Legitimate Self-Defense”, pp. 48-49

– we are just “making believe” we are killing people. Also: Why is the genre of “Crime”, featuring weapons and violence such a large and popular category in TV and film? Is there a psychological connection with recreational shooting sports? Is part of the explanation that we can experience the adrenalin rush of violence and the use of weapons in the safe environment of a “make believe” world of story? Is identity and role-playing the hook that make this type of recreation somewhat addictive? We need to ask ourselves why we have a romantic obsession with firearms. Is it contributing to our “being conformed to the image of Christ”<sup>65</sup>? Can we even imagine Jesus of Nazareth or His apostles binge-watching a Crime series on TV? Or weekly going down to the shooting range at the Gun Club?

”All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable.

All things are lawful, but not all things edify.”

1 Corinthians 10:23

(Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:12)

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<sup>65</sup> Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18

Bill & Frances Furioso  
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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, disciplined many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... [www.AtChristsTable.org](http://www.AtChristsTable.org)

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