

ARE THERE ANY JUST WARS?



## DOES JESUS OPPOSE WAR?

Jesus said that those who are peacemakers are blessed--not just peacekeepers, but those who actively seek to unite parties at odds with one another. In the Christian faith, this is best exemplified by Jesus, in whose death we see, in the words of Paul, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself."

Observations on Jesus' comments in the Sermon on the Mount:

"Do not resist an evil person": This passage needs clarification. Police and law enforcement are necessary to preserve order in society. Romans 13:4 makes clear that evildoers are to be resisted. Jesus forcefully resisted the money-changers in the temple in John 2. What Jesus is saying in this passage does not apply to how the state should operate but how disciples of Christ should operate in their interpersonal relationships. (The state, for example, must bring evildoers to justice. "Forgive your enemies" would not be appropriate for a justice system, letting off criminals without punishment.)

"Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also": This text does not mean that your child cannot defend himself as a last resort when being beaten up by the school bully. And the text clearly does not imply that we stand by while a woman is being raped. Even Jesus, when slapped by order of the priest, didn't literally "turn the other cheek." Rather, he said, "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike me?" (John 18:23).

"And if someone wants to sue and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well": The cloak (outer garment) was considered the inalienable right or possession under the law of Moses (Exodus 22:26). Jesus is here saying, "Gladly part with what is legally yours." The Christian surrenders his "inalienable rights" for the good of others.

"If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles": In Christ's time, a Roman soldier could force a Jew to carry a burden one mile (1,000 paces) and no more. This action was meant to infuriate the Jews since the Jews despised the Romans. Can you imagine the shock if a follower of Christ would offer to carry the load another mile? This displays a supernatural disposition. Christ here says, "Go beyond expectations forced upon you."

"Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you": This passage does not justify indiscriminate giving, but rather cheerful, sacrificial generosity--even to those who are evil. We should not, however, give money to the person with a drug habit--pray for them--furnish them food--get them help but no money should be given to shoot in their veins. In Jesus reference to generosity He is not advocating a government welfare system which gives handouts to all who ask. To the contrary, Paul wrote that a person should work if he is to eat.

## JUSTIFICATION FOR WAR?

If a war is ever to be fought, its principles should be just, keeping in mind both human beings as made in God's image and the reality of human sinfulness:<sup>1</sup>

1) **JUST CAUSE:** The only morally legitimate reason to go to war is for self-defense (or for defending a nation in moral need of defense)--or if there is very strong reason for a pre-emptive strike (e.g., a "rogue nation" with "dirty bombs"). For a pre-emptive strike there must be conclusive proof of emanate danger: "If these rules were universally followed there would be no aggressors and no wars."

2) **JUST INTENT:** The only morally legitimate goal in war is the restoration of peace, with justice for both friend and foe: "Vengeance, subjugation, profit and conquest are unjustifiable purposes." Unfortunately, there are times when, there may be "unintentional effects" (death of civilians) which accompany the intended effect of restraining violence and restoring peace.

3) **LAST RESORT:** "war should be entered into only when negotiation, arbitration, compromise and all other paths fail; for as a rational being man should, if at all possible, settle his disputes by reason and law, not by force."

4) **LAWFUL DECLARATION:** Only a lawful government has the right to initiate war. Only the state--not individuals or parties within the state--can legitimately exercise this authority.

5) **IMMUNITY OF NON-COMBATANTS:** "those not officially serving as agents of the government in its use of force, including POW's, medical personnel and services, should not be permitted to fight and are not to be subject to violence."

6) **LIMITED OBJECTIVES:** The goal of war is peace--not the destruction of the enemy nation's economy nor the destruction of its political institutions or infrastructure.

7) **LIMITED MEANS:** "only sufficient force should be used to resist violence and restore peace." "Sufficient" does not necessarily mean decisive victory.

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This article contains excerpts from a panel discussion, used by permission of Dr. Paul Copan a visiting Assistant Professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, traveling speaker and author of "True for You, But Not for Me and That's Just Your Interpretation."

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Reference:

[1] Taken from Arthur Holmes' essay ("Just War") in Four Views on War, ed., Robert Clouse (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 4-5.

Ravi Zacharias International Ministries

Statement of Faith

We believe there is one God who is infinitely perfect, existing eternally in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe Jesus Christ to be true God and in His incarnation to have been true man. He was born of the Virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit, died for our sins and was raised from the dead for our justification. He is now seated at the right hand of God in majesty, making intercession as our High Priest. He will come again to establish His kingdom of righteousness and peace.

We believe the Old and New Testaments to be the infallible word of God, inerrant as originally given, verbally inspired by God and the complete and sufficient revelation of His will for man's salvation and conduct.

We believe man was originally created in the image of God.

Through disobedience and self-centeredness he incurred both physical and spiritual death. Thus, all are now born with a sinful nature, separated from God and can be saved only through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. All who are unrepentant and unbelieving will be lost in a Christless eternity of conscious torment; for those who believe eternity will be spent in God's presence, in His distinct joy and bliss.

We believe the church consists of all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They join together for worship, prayer, fellowship, the proclamation of the Gospel and observance of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

We believe in the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as both personal and visible. This is our blessed hope and serves as an incentive for holy living and faithful service.

We believe in the Great Commission to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord to the uttermost parts of the earth.