

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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“...buy a sword”

(Jerry Fite)

The American citizen has the constitutional right to “keep and bear arms,” a right not to be “infringed upon.” But does the Christian have a God-given right to carry a weapon, and use it to protect himself, and his family members from those who seek their physical harm? The Bible is the authority sought in answering this question, not the Constitution of the United States.

In recent years, churches have become soft targets for those who desire to harm a multitude of people. Young and old, male and female, rich and poor, all gathered to worship God are focused upon God, not the front door. A gunman, sane or insane, motivated by personal revenge, or public attention can enter an assembly, with little or no resistance, and terrorize a community in a matter of minutes. May a Christian resist such evil?

Some would say no, for Jesus clearly taught that we are to “resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39). Jesus is stressing how one should react to personal offenses, and personal demands. If one strikes you per-

sonally on your cheek, takes you to court to confiscate your personal items, demands you go one mile, or seeks to borrow something from you personally, how should you react. To resist by returning a blow to the cheek of the assailant, relying on the “eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” law, is what Jesus is condemning.

One should not think, when struck, that the evil should not be resisted at all. Jesus did not literally turn the other cheek when struck. But He did resist the evil done to him. He addressed his assailant to stop and think: “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me? (John 18:23).

It would be ignoring other authoritative Scripture to say evil is not to be resisted, because we know civil government is God’s minister of wrath against evil (Romans 13:4). It would also be wrong to take Jesus’s statement regarding personal wrongs, and apply them to the question of offering protection for others.

Jesus pointed His disciples to a change that was to take place in their future. Earlier, they were able to rely upon those who received them to supply money,

food and necessities. Jesus says, “But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword” (Luke 22:36). While it was not to be used to prevent Jesus from capture, as Peter would soon be reminded (John 18:10-11), Peter was told to sheath his sword, not permanently rid himself of it. Jesus replies with “that is enough” when shown that His disciples have “two swords” (Luke 22:38). Why would Jesus exhort his disciples to buy a sword, and then say they have an adequate number if protection from harm is not what Jesus is authorizing? Two small swords certainly do not comprise an adequate number for warfare.

Not every killing is murder. If a thief be caught breaking in, and then killed, “there shall be no bloodguiltiness for him” (Exodus 22:2). Not every situation is the presiding government coming in to drag Christians out to be imprisoned, and executed, which no true Christian would resist (Acts 8:3, 9:1-2, Revelation 12:11). But protecting one’s wife, children or fellow brethren from a blood thirsty gunman is a circumstance which buying a gun, and using it accordingly can apply.