

Fundamentals of Belief
#15B: The Cause of War

Edited Sermon Transcript
Jon W. Brisby; 8-11-2001

Brethren, we are going to continue with this series of sermons that I have been giving for well over a year and a half on the Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal. If you will recall, last time we began fundamental number fifteen on war and military service. Hopefully, we are going to complete this topic today with the second portion.

Let me begin again, as always, by reading the fundamental word for word as Mr. Armstrong originally wrote it. As I mentioned to you, although I don't know exactly the time when he composed this list of the first twenty fundamentals, I am very certain that it was in and around the time of the Second World War. So, this topic of war and military service was probably much more important in the lives of the people in the Church and those who were being called to build that original body in the Radio Church of God, even than we think about it at this time. In times of peace, these are not the things that we think about most often, but I am sure that it was very compelling during the time that it was actually written. And yet, I am very certain that there is a time when these principles are going to become very much front and center for us again with the events that are yet to occur before the return of Jesus Christ.

Here is the fundamental as it reads:

We believe that Christian disciples of Christ are forbidden by Him and the commandments of God to kill, or in any manner directly or indirectly to take human life; by whatsoever means; we believe that bearing arms is directly contrary to this fundamental doctrine of our belief; we therefore conscientiously refuse to bear arms or to come under the military authority.

So, if you will recall from last time, I went through some fundamental material before getting into the details, which we are going to do today. But, I began by giving you some overall principles and concepts that were important to understand first. Those include the fact that war, in and of itself, is not wrong if it is authorized and carried out by the proper party. Who is the only proper party who can initiate war? God. God reserves the right, Himself, to declare war. Killing, in and of itself, is not wrong if it is used by the proper authority and in the proper means. As I gave you—we won't turn to it again—but Deuteronomy 32:39 where God says, "I kill and I make alive." Therefore, killing, in that sense, cannot be wrong when God does it and in the way that God does it. The important thing is that we come to understand the distinction between when and how war and killing can avoid being in that category of breaking the commandments and coming under sin.

Obviously, God is perfect, and we went through those scriptures to show that He is a perfect, loving God and there is no error in Him. All of His ways are righteousness. This very righteous God, at times, also kills. This righteous God who is perfect in love, mercy and understanding, filled with the Holy Spirit, also declares war. We found that the way to understand how to reconcile those concepts, which to human minds naturally seem contradictory, is to recognize that when God kills, it is to execute the penalty for capital sin.

One of the very first instructions that He gave to Adam and Eve was that they were not to touch that tree in the garden—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they did, it was going to carry a death penalty. So, from the very beginning of that recreation, God outlined a law that carried capital punishment if it was broken. Obviously, we are not dealing with a God who creates laws and speaks in any kind of a vain purpose whatsoever. If God said that death was the result of breaking a law, then you better believe that He was willing to actually carry out that penalty.

So, killing in order to fulfill God's law of the sentence of judgment for capital crime is absolutely a correct purpose. God is the One who is the authority because He made all that exists. He is absolutely authorized to carry out the execution of a sentence for breaking His cardinal laws. We went through and saw a number of laws that were given to ancient Israel as God vested within Israel the civil authority to manage that nation. The leaders of that nation under Moses were absolutely ordered to obey those laws and to carry out the sentences that went along with capital crime.

In a case of murder, the murderer who was found guilty under the testimony of two or three witnesses was put to death. That was killing, but it wasn't murder. As we saw in Exodus 20:13, the law against killing should read, "Thou shalt not murder." The Hebrew word is not "kill," but "murder." Thou shalt not take life contrary to that which God has established. It is not for man to determine when and how to use those laws at all. God is the One who has the authority to kill according to His law for the purpose of executing judgment.

For today's message, we are going to talk about coming under the military authority of men's governments and the wars that men generate one against the other. What is the cause of man's wars? Are these wars authorized by God? Do they also carry from God the authority to kill others? We will find later on that there was a scripture that the Church always used in order to show that governments have the authority to carry out capital punishment. But, when we are talking about wars, we are not talking about capital punishment at all; we are talking about something different. What is the cause of man's wars? Are their motives honorable?

Let's look at a few quotes. First, I want to begin with a quote from Abraham Lincoln. This is taken from his second inaugural address from March 4th, 1865. And some of you are aware, this is the very message—the very address—that is actually carved in marble on one of the walls of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. That happens to be my favorite memorial of all of those in the nation's capital. Whenever I have had an opportunity on business over the past years, I have enjoyed going to see the Lincoln Memorial. There is something about it, with that huge marble statue of President Lincoln sitting there. On one wall is the Gettysburg Address in its entirety—carved into that huge wall on the left as you are looking at the statue. On the right are excerpts from his second inaugural address. I remember being hit by that as I stood there and read that address, although I had read it before, but something about standing by that memorial at the time really struck me.

As I was putting together this sermon, I immediately thought of it. When you talk about the inconsistencies in the orientation of man in the midst of war and how totally contradictory they are in their purposes, there is no one who said it better, I think—humanly speaking—than Abraham Lincoln. So, even though he was at that very time engaged in the Civil War—or as the southerners like to call it, the War Between the States—at that very time, though, in the midst of that conflict, as he was being sworn in the second time for a second four-year term, he even saw the inconsistencies and recognized that which was being perpetrated between those that God had set aside.

Notice his quote:

Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. . . . Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully.

Even Abraham Lincoln understood the contradictory nature of that which was going on during that Civil War in this country. Each invoked the aid of the same God that they prayed to in order to help them become victorious over their enemy. Do we think that God was approving or siding with men in that kind of a war? Obviously, we believe that He influenced the outcome because it was His purpose at that time that this nation not be divided. But, did He approve and sanction the killing of thousands and thousands of men over the course of that four-plus-year war that took place? I did not look up the numbers, but I believe I have seen statistics that say that more United States citizens died in the Civil War than in all of the other wars fought by this country on foreign soil. That is a lot of death. Was that justified and authorized by God? No, it wasn't, brethren.

Turn with me to James 4:1. Here, in the Holy Scriptures that God preserved through His faithful apostles, we find a comment on the real reason for men's wars; and this means for all of man's wars.

James 4:1–3:

"From whence come wars and fightings among you?" Here, he asks the question. Technically, this is a letter to the churches, so He is dealing with those in the Church; and yet, what you are going to find is that the answer is for anyone who is not using the power of the Holy Spirit to subjugate the self. They are reverting to the natural nature and applying that orientation of heart and mind, which is of murder, killing and hatred.

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

What is the natural orientation of all human beings who have ever been upon this earth? What is the real reason and cause for all human wars? Those wars that have not been ordained and sanctioned by God have been perpetrated out of the very minds of men, and why do they come? They are all rooted in lust—an inordinate desire for that which they do not possess and that which they want from someone else. That is the reason for it, brethren. That is the common denominator. Put aside all of the patriotic banner-waving and everything else, as every country in the world tries to whip up their people to believe that they as a human nation are right and someone else is wrong. But ultimately, when it comes down to it—out of all of those people, many of whom are praying to the very same God and asking for victory against their neighbor—the root of it is anything but godly. It is lust. It is covetousness and a desire to have that which belongs to someone else.

This world's wars, brethren, are always, invariably, about money and power. They are centered upon greed. Strip away everything else that you ever see or hear written or spoken and it is all centered upon greed. I couldn't help but think about the year that I was at Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, and one of the classes that I actually enjoyed the most was World History. And, obviously taught from a perspective of the Church, it was much more valuable than any course I could have taken in any of the world's colleges. It was fascinating to go back and review the history of ancient and modern civilization and to discuss the wars that have formed geography and human development over time.

My professor told us the answer to the questions concerning the cause for wars. Invariably, as we went through the material, no matter what age, no matter what century we were discussing—whether it was the Greeks, the Romans, the ancient Babylonians, the Egyptians, or those coming up through modern ages—it didn't matter. What was the cause and the answer for the question about the wars that took place in history? Trade routes. That was the reason that most wars were fought—to have possession of the geography that it took to pursue their economic endeavors, and the opportunity to make money and to have strategic power over trade routes.

If you think that doesn't play a part in why so many wars have been fought in the Middle East—even in the very land that God set aside for His people, the land of Canaan—then you are sadly mistaken. If you look at the geography of that part of the Mediterranean Sea, you find that it was a natural trade route from north to south, from Africa into Asia, into the East and to Western Europe. There shouldn't be any wonder why so many wars were fought even for possession of that very land. It is ironic to me to think that if God had wanted it to be any other way, He certainly could have given Israel a land that was isolated somewhere and maybe wasn't as desirable for other

nefarious purposes. Yet, He seemed to have given the Promised Land to His people in an area that was going to be fraught with turmoil and the potential of war because of how precious that land was.

That is what we were taught in my world history class at Ambassador College. If you didn't do your studying and you really weren't sure, but you came across a question on the test that asked the reason for a war, you always picked the option A, B, C, or D that was trade routes. You had a 99 out of 100 percent chance of getting that question right. Trade routes, money, geography, power, economics—that is why men's wars are fought, brethren.

The question becomes, then, is that a noble cause for which any of us—those who are in the Church and part of the Body of Christ—are justified to partake in? Let me read you some other quotes. This is a quote from a figure in American history who you are familiar with, Mr. Henry Ford. This is what he said: "Do you want to know the cause of war? It is capitalism, greed, the dirty hunger for dollars. Take away the capitalist, and you will sweep war from the earth." So said Henry Ford.

Here are several quotes from Albert Einstein. Listen to what he had to say:

The armament industry is indeed one of the greatest dangers that beset mankind. It is the hidden evil power behind the nationalism which is rampant everywhere. . . . And those who have an interest in keeping the machinery of war going are a very powerful body; they will stop at nothing to make public opinion subservient to their murderous ends. . . . One has to realize that the powerful industrial groups concerned in the manufacture of arms are doing their best in all countries to prevent the peaceful settlement of international disputes . . .

Albert Einstein even understood it. Get past the patriotism, brethren—the faithfulness to and support of your country in which you were born—and recognize that there is no government on the face of this earth that is acting for the cause of God. They are all selfish and greedy.

Here is a quotation from a piece on the Internet from *The Ploughshares Monitor*, June 2000, called, "Resources, Greed and the Persistence of Violent Conflict":

"But what if the principal motive behind conflict is greed not grievance?" That is what they all claim, isn't it? The reason that we are engaged in this war is because we have been wronged. We have been brutalized by this other nation. They have done us

wrong in some way. They have taken something from us. They have infringed upon our civil liberties. We have no choice but to defend ourselves. That is what we are told. That is always what we are told. That is what the other nation that we are at war with is telling their people and why they are backing their government against us or whatever countries may be involved in the war. They all claim to have a grievance.

This piece says, "But what if the principal motive behind conflict is greed not grievance? And what if war is eminently rational for its protagonists, particularly their leaders? Profit rather than political power seems to be a growing motivation for violence in civil wars. Whether through diamonds in Sierra Leone and Angola, tropical timber in Liberia and Cambodia, narcotics in Colombia and Afghanistan, or even humanitarian aid in Somalia and the Sudan, the accumulation of wealth seems to be at the heart of many contemporary conflicts. According to one commentator, paraphrasing the famous Clausewitzian dictum, 'war has increasingly become the continuation of economics by other means' (Keen 1998, p. 11)."

Economics, greed, power—that is at the source of human warring.

Here is a quote from a man named James Connolly, and I believe he is a Marxist, so he is one who points at capitalists; and yet, we know that the socialist orientation is no different at all. Its goals are the same; they just go about it in a different way. But here is what James Connolly says in the *Workers' Republic* from August 20, 1898:

The Cabinets who rule the destinies of nations from the various capitals of Europe are but the tools of the moneyed interest. Their quarrels are not dictated by sentiments of national pride or honour, but by the avarice and lust of power on the part of the class to which they belong. The people who fight under their banners in the various armies or navies do indeed imagine they are fighting the battles of their own country, but in what country has it ever happened that the people have profited by foreign conquest? The influence which impels towards war today is the influence of capitalism. Every war now is a capitalist move for new markets, and it is a move capitalism must make or perish. The mad scramble for wealth which this century has witnessed has resulted in lifting almost every European country into the circle of competition for trade.

He is absolutely right about that. Of course, he is trying to make it appear as if socialism is an answer or is somehow in contrast to capitalism, and it is not. It is still

the means to subjugate the people and to accumulate wealth for an elite and for the leaders of a country. They have the very same goals that all other human beings do on the face of this earth, so there is no difference. We all have the same human nature.

As Albert Einstein said, "There is money in war"—even of itself. It would be totally impossible to get rid of the war trade because there are so many billions of dollars that are used primarily to come up with new technology in order to continue the very business of war.

Isaiah 2:4—this is actually a prophecy for the return of Jesus Christ in the time of that Millennium when a new orientation is going to take over and the ideology that exists on the face of the earth today is going to be different.

Isaiah 2:3–4:

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the [Eternal] from Jerusalem.

This is at the return of Christ when Christ will establish His government, His world-ruling order, upon this earth.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

That is what is going on in the world today, brethren. Men learn war. It is a science. It is that which they practice as art, and they proliferate it on a daily basis somewhere around the world. This is a prophecy of a time when that orientation will no longer rule as it has for the last six thousand years, as men in defiant disobedience to God have practiced their greedy, nefarious ways and have waged war against their fellow man. There is a time coming when men will beat their swords into plowshares. They will no longer be practicing or learning the art of war. Not at all. That time is not yet, brethren, because we are still living under the governments of men as God is allowing until the return of Jesus Christ. We have yet to see, if we live long enough, even the greatest wars of men that have ever been fought on this earth—a time that has never been, nor ever will be again—and the mass slaughter of human beings.

The origins of men's wars are not righteous at all, no matter what is claimed—that they are for a defensive purpose in order to shield and protect our own borders, to protect the people of our nation from other rogue nations. No, ultimately you can bet that at the heart of it is greed and a desire for illicit power. Brethren, no matter how we might try to justify it, those who are members of the Body of Christ can never be authorized to partake in such wars. We are not to partake of this world's orientation of lust.

2 Peter 1:3–4:

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Those of us, brethren, who are called by God, those of you who have had your eyes opened to understand the Truth in these last days, have been given an opportunity to partake of the divine nature, the very Holy Spirit of God. ". . . having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust"—to divest ourselves of this very orientation that drives all human beings by nature and to begin to value something else instead.

As Mr. Armstrong always used to say, it is the difference between the way of give and the way of get. There is probably no simpler way to define the difference in the orientation of God versus the natural orientation of man—give versus get.

If the reasons for man's wars are not acceptable in God's sight, then we cannot be justified in taking part in them in any way. It does not matter how much we may have natural feelings of patriotism toward the country of our birth and recognize the blessings that we have enjoyed within these borders. I know it is difficult for any of us who may have thoughts and ideas like, *Don't we owe something for all that we have received? Shouldn't we do our duty as others?* If it weren't for the Church, I know that orientation would motivate many. In and of itself, it would not be wrong, except that it is the motivation and orientation that comes from those who have not been given the priceless gift that all of you have been given.

I can tell you, brethren, that had I not been raised in a family in the Church, I likely would have gone into the military. I have a natural tendency to respect and to

value the discipline, the principles and the opportunities that are often a part of military service. Some of my best friends in high school had managed their entire educational careers to try and prepare themselves to be accepted, one of them into West Point and one of them into the Air Force Academy. I had no such goals because I was raised in the Church, and I knew that wasn't right; but outside of that, I could have very easily been motivated. I probably, very likely, would have prepared myself for the very same opportunity.

I know a number of you who have served in the military as well, prior to coming into the Church, and I know those who also would have those natural abilities and proclivities. So, I certainly understand it. But, it is because of the knowledge of the reason for men's wars and the fact that participating in man's wars, not God's wars, would actually cause us to violate a command against murder. Killing that is not authorized and approved of by God for the execution of capital sentencing is murder. Therefore, the taking of any life under arms and fighting for any country, no matter how patriotic it seems to be at the time, is participating in killing that God has not approved of. Again, as Abraham Lincoln said, they pray to the same God for victory against the enemy who is also praying to the very same God. God supports none of it.

Matthew 26:51. It is difficult, you see, for human beings to make right decisions, to know when to act and when not to act. Here is the example of Peter, as an aggressive disciple who was thinking that this was certainly the time, in defending Christ from being arrested, when Christ would authorize his use of force for good. And yet, because Peter didn't understand God's will or His plan at that particular time—it was yet to be revealed—he was misguided.

Matthew 26:51–52:

And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus [That was Peter.] stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Human beings cannot orient their lives appropriately when they are separated from God. They are missing that ingredient which is absolutely required in order to have wisdom, understanding and righteousness. So, the wars of men are not authorized. Even at this very time, Peter was misguided because he thought he was doing God's will

in defending the very Son of God from these enemies who were trying to take Him into custody. And yet, it was God's will and purpose that those things occur; and Peter, unbeknownst to him, was actually trying to undermine the very plan that God was working out—the beautiful mosaic that was being carried out through Christ's arrest, sentencing, crucifixion and death.

2 Corinthians 10:3—here we find the Apostle Paul comparing our service in the Church as members of the Body of Christ to a war. You are going to hear a lot about this because that is my very topic for the Feast of Tabernacles this year—spiritual warfare. We are going to go through Ephesians 6 and the armor of God—all of those pieces that are the armaments of war for Christians—and the spiritual warfare that each one of us is engaged in even at this very moment. We have to come to understand the difference between God's war and the spiritual armaments that are required in order to fight the battle that He has enlisted us in, versus that of men.

2 Corinthians 10:3–5:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [They are not the carnal orientation that is guiding every human leader of every nation around the world.], but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Yes, brethren, we are soldiers. We are absolutely, every single one of us, soldiers enlisted in an army fighting a war even right now. If we recognize what that calling to become a Christian and to be part of the Body of Christ is all about, then we recognize that we are spiritual soldiers, even now. But whose army are we enlisted in, brethren? Whose service are we going to be most loyal to—that of a physical nation, even though we all have a very strong personal regard for the country of our birth? That patriotism is always a natural feeling that we have, but we must come to understand that when we are given that call to become a part of God's Body and soldiers in His army, then our loyalties must change with it. As soldiers in Christ's army, we must be willing to give our loyalty to Him.

Romans 12:17. Here is the difficult requirement placed upon Christians that is impossible to achieve by anyone who is not called of God. Overcoming the natural

nature of the human mind is impossible except for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Here is a requirement for the soldiers of the army of Christ who are part of that Body—flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone. This is a code of conduct that we are expected to live by which is in total contradiction to everything that we learn in the world.

Romans 12:17–19:

"Recompense to no man evil for evil. . . ." Isn't that the basis of many of the wars, or at least as they are described? We are protecting ourselves from the invader—that party or nation who threatens our national security. We have no other choice but to defend ourselves; we are the home of the free. We have to maintain our freedom for the benefit of all nations of the world. That is how we justify going to war. Yet, for Christians, it is very plain.

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

It means, brethren, that as Christians, it is not our time to fight. There is a time to fight, and it will be when God ordains it, according to His perfect purpose. We are prohibited, therefore, according to these spiritual principles, from being enlisted in the military service of our countries or fighting against any country at all, even our own.

There are all these people out there who think they are warring for real freedom, even against the leaders of our own nation, and they are absolutely wrong. They are no better—no matter how righteous they think they are in their cause—by declaring a silent, insipid war against this nation's leaders, than those who are fighting outside its borders. All of those orientations generate from human minds, not from God. We are not to engage in any of those activities, brethren, if we want to fulfill the will of God.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.
Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath:
for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

God has reserved that right of protection—of security—to Himself. He gave ancient Israel the promise that if they faithfully obeyed, He would fight their battles for them. All they had to do was love that God who called them, separated them out and made them a holy nation. They had to be willing to live up to the law, the judgments

and the statutes that were perfect and righteous, and to trust God. No matter what they were facing, no matter what threat from any enemy nation on their border, no matter how big the obstacle seemed, all they had to do was put their confidence in Him, and He promised to fight their battles for them.

That is what He is promising here, brethren. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." That is a hard, hard thing for human beings to accept, let alone to practice. Ancient Israel couldn't do it. They always, invariably, took things into their own hands. We don't have time to go through it, but you know the accounts of when the Israelites went out and assembled themselves to battle without the support or backing of God, and they were absolutely decimated. When they followed the instructions that God gave them, and waited—even certain instructions that seemed totally ridiculous to human beings, even the fact that they won while Moses' hands were in the air, and when his hands became too tired and dropped, the enemy began to succeed against Israel. How phenomenal is that? God was demonstrating that it was He who was fighting the battle, not human beings at all. He was the One who was to be given credit for the victory.

Now, we have been given the Holy Spirit, which ancient Israel did not have. They could not have the faith that you have the opportunity to possess and to demonstrate—to trust that same living God for your protection and for your safety, trusting that He will fight our battles; and that even when certain things are permitted by God as tests, trials and threats to our lives or to our security humanly, we turn to Him rather than to our own ability. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

What about the role of hatred in man's wars? We have already touched on it in a small way. See, a nation must have the support of its population in order to be successful, and so the goal has always been to get grassroots support for the cause of the war against the enemy. Obviously, all nations use propaganda to whip up the hatred of their own people against the enemy, to vilify that enemy, so that there will be unanimity among the people—that morale that is necessary within the nation in order to support the war effort. We have a righteous cause for what we're doing and everyone is behind it, and so all of the media is employed for that purpose and end. Nations whip up hatred against the enemy to solidify their own people, and there is no better bond between people than that of a common enemy. You can take two individuals who have hated one another, and yet, give them a common threat and you will see those two come together in unity like never before in order to fight that common enemy. There is nothing like war

against another nation or an enemy agent that can overcome the separation of people within a country. A common enemy is one of the greatest things that can be used to bind people together.

I can't help but think about my first recognition of that experience, even when I was a grade-schooler. For the first four years of grade school, I was in the very sheltered environment of Imperial Schools in Pasadena. Because it was so regimented and strict, there was no opportunity allowed for peer pressure or serious problems between children at school. That really did not happen. And so, I had my first experience with the real world when I entered public school in fifth grade. I can't tell you how I got on the wrong side of this one particular girl who was a classmate, but I can tell you she probably weighed twice as much as I did and she knew it. I was always very small for my age. For some reason, she decided to pick on me and I was somebody she despised. For the first several months that I was in public school, she and another one of her friends invariably did everything they could to agitate me with all kinds of verbal threats and other things.

I had never experienced that before, so I had to learn something new. I think I kept my cool and tried to fend it off; one, because she could have beaten me up very easily if she had wanted to, so I didn't want to mess with that. But, I remember the day—I think I was in the gymnasium—and she and her friend walked up to me and said, "We have decided we are going to leave you alone because we have found someone we hate more than you." Isn't that the way human minds work? Find a threat—something that you hate more—and you can see a change in orientation between former enemies or foes. That is exactly one of the tools that is used and that governments play upon their own populations in order to gain support for their wars.

One of the reasons that the United States delayed its entry into World War II was not because the leaders did not have the will and determination to participate with and help the United Kingdom. They were waiting until they were confident that they had the support of the population of the United States. They had to have the people behind them because it was a political move.

So, the media is used as a weapon, a tool, in order to whip up hatred against the enemy, to politically solidify a people behind its leaders. How does God, by contrast, say that we are to treat an enemy? If we are Christians, if we are called now to be a part of God's army—the very Body of Jesus Christ—then how are we to deal with our enemies? The way that human nations deal with their enemies? In war, hatred and bitterness?

Turn with me to Matthew 5:43–45, and we will see the command that is given to the soldiers of God.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father . . .

See, that is the hallmark of those who are the children of God the Father as opposed to the children of the world who are separated from God and are being led and inspired instead by our archenemy. If we are part of the world, if we are separated from God, if we are not God's children, then yes, we will act upon every natural impulse that all human beings do, including going to war against our nation's enemies. But, if we are first and foremost the children of God, then we must take a different orientation altogether.

. . . Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Doesn't sound fair to human beings, does it? The fact that God said He has written into His plan a limited period of time when even the evil of the world seem to win—even against those who are trying their best to live up to God's righteousness. It is according to His will, and we have to believe in faith, as we already read in Romans 12, ". . . Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." That takes faith, brethren. It takes vision for us to really internalize those principles. According to the flesh, we want to fight the enemy; we want to fight our holy war against those enemies.

Proverbs 24:17:

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth . . ." Isn't that hard to do? Here is somebody who is against you, who has declared themselves to be at war with you, even if you don't want to declare war on them. They are a thorn in your flesh, agitating you, causing you mental, if not physical, anguish. Isn't it the natural proclivity to rejoice when something bad happens to them? *Oh goody, they finally got what they deserved.*

Isn't that what we think? Yes, that is the natural response, but we are told in the wisdom of the Proverbs, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth . . ."

Somebody who is using those principles and internalizing that orientation of mind is not going to make a good soldier in the armies of men today. It is totally against that which they are taught in their training for military service.

Proverbs 25:21–22:

"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat . . ." If you were enlisted in the United States army and you walked across the battle line and gave bread to your enemy, I think you would end up in the brig right away. That is the difference in the orientation of those of us who are to be a part of the very Body of Jesus Christ.

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the [Eternal] shall reward thee.

It takes faith to wait for the reward of God when, humanly speaking, it appears that it is never going to come. When we can take things into our own hands and solicit the result that we want, it is much harder to act in faith and let God fight our battles.

So, what about this issue that we have already talked about concerning our patriotic duty? The question becomes, brethren, to whose government are we most loyal? To whose government do you most consider yourself a citizen? Who is it that holds your loyalty and my loyalty?

John 18:36. Christ is standing before Pilate, the governor over Judea in the Roman Empire, and He is answering his questions. Here, He gives an account to answer for His orientation:

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews . . .

But remember, within just hours previous to that, we saw Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. Peter did not understand that principle, and he thought that he

was defending Christ and fighting for God. Christ is clarifying now why He put a stop to that and why He healed the ear of the high priest's servant and told Peter to put away his sword.

. . . My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Pilate didn't understand; he said, "What is truth?" He was carnal. He was thinking as a warrior of the government of Rome. He didn't understand what Christ was emphasizing here. If we are the people of God and if our citizenship is in the Body of Christ, then we take our military orders from that same God and not from any human being.

Notice Philippians 3:20. "For our conversation . . ." And this is a mistranslation; the Greek word is appropriately translated "citizenship." "For our [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ . . ." That is the government to whom we have been called to be loyal. That is the citizenship that has the right to call us to arms in service. Yes, brethren, there is a day coming when there is going to be a great war authorized by God upon this earth, and He will call His saints and His people to fight that war. Then, I guarantee you, the killing of war will be absolutely authorized by that God who created us all. We do not take our orders from the military service, or from anyone else but the One who has all authority to create war.

1 Corinthians 7:22–23:

"For he that is called in the Lord . . ." Is that not who we are, brethren?
For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman:
likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought
with a price . . .

Yes, we are bought with a price. Regardless of where we are from on the face of this earth and in what country we were born physically, if we were called to be a part of the Body of Christ, then we have changed our citizenship. Our citizenship is in heaven.

"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." We know that we are subject to the authority of man's government as long as it does not violate the law of God, and so we are not opposed to men's governments. We do not approve of the things that men's governments do, but we are not out trying to fight against them at all, because we trust that God's will is being done. And so, we do not become a part of these patriot movements and all of these subversive enterprises within the country. We are not a part of that. That is just as much against the law of God as anything else that is being perpetrated in the name of righteousness. We do not participate in those things. Again, we let God fight our battles. We are not going to do as ancient Israel did, and get out there thinking that, in righteousness, we are upholding His will, only to find out that we are doing exactly opposite from what He intends to occur.

"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." Of course, someone might ask, "If everyone acted that way, who would protect our nation's borders? If everyone turned the other cheek and acted like a good Christian, like we are supposed to do, and they did good to their enemies, wouldn't the enemy just overrun us?" The thing is, brethren, there are only a very few who have been called to be a part of that Body in these last days—to have the opportunity to understand that Truth and receive the Holy Spirit. Most are absolutely living in deception. They are going about doing their will and doing it their way. Of those few who are called and given that priceless opportunity now, we have to be willing to act on it. Otherwise, we are guilty of rejecting that very Christ.

2 Timothy 2:3–4. Remember, I told you that you have been called to be a soldier. Absolutely, you have been called into military service. No matter how old or young you are, you have been called into military service—pressed into duty.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

There is the crux, brethren. Who are we taking our orders from? Which general is it that has dominion over our lives—the human military organization of our physical birth, or the spiritual General, Jesus Christ, who has called us into His army and made us soldiers in His service? That is where our citizenship and loyalty should lie, brethren. It is inconsistent to think that we can have it both ways. We cannot live as disciples of Christ in His service and also participate in the military of any country on this earth sponsored by men. It is totally inconsistent.

What about the faith issue? We have not had any problem with the draft in this country now for a long time. Now, I had to register with the selective service when I turned eighteen. I was in school in Pasadena, and I remember going down to the post office in Pasadena and filling out my form. I wrote "conscientious objector" across the top of my form, even though there wasn't a place to put that anywhere on the form. In fact, the lady at the post office who was having us fill it out, intentionally said, "Well, this isn't where you put anything about your objection to serving in the military. You are just supposed to fill it out to be registered." I still wrote in the margins, up one column and across the top, "conscientious objector." I didn't want them to have any doubt, but I did comply with the requirement that the government gave, which was to fill out the form. I did that. It wasn't a violation of God's law to do so.

Of course, we have lived in times of relative peace, so I didn't experience being in danger of being drafted into the military. Some of you have. There are some of you sitting before me who I know have dealt with that very challenge of being drafted, or having the potential of being called up, and having your faith tested as a conscientious objector in the Church. And yet, I know that God provided the means to get you through it.

We have one young man in the Church in Switzerland who has had probably the greatest test that I can even think of or have heard of. In the country of Switzerland, all young men—without exception—are mandated to serve their time in the military, and not just in a time of war, but also in peacetime. They all are mandated automatically by the law. So, think about what his trial was—to come of age and face the potential of jail, of prison, for not fulfilling the obligation of the law in his country. As intense, difficult and harrowing as that experience was, God provided the means—miraculously! It just doesn't happen, brethren; and yet, He provided the means. That young man's faith was absolutely substantiated and strengthened by virtue of putting his trust absolutely in the law of God.

Might it happen again? Likely, it will. I don't have to worry about it. They consider me way too old now—which I don't especially like the idea of—but there are a lot of young people coming up in the Church today who may face that very trial. Will we have the faith as a body, brethren, to stand by those principles that we were taught and choose the spiritual principles over the physical threats? How many other trials will each one of us face in our own ways as we draw nearer to the return of Christ? Can we act in faith? Can we really put into practice those principles?

When do human governments have the authority to kill? Is it in declaring war against other nations? No. The Church always taught that they do have the authority to enforce capital punishment.

Romans 13:1–4:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

And so, we were taught to understand that this means even the human governments who are separated from God. God is the One who sets up and takes down the rulers of every nation. Those governments exist by His express permission. He has given that authority into those government hands and continues to sustain it, even if they abuse that authority.

For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

So, we are not to be defiant of the laws of the land as long as they do not conflict with the laws of God.

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same . . .

Now, there is a day coming when doing good is going to bring persecution, but I think most of us have lived within our human governments where, if you keep your nose clean and don't violate the laws, you get along pretty good. It is not always going to continue that way, but I think most of us have been blessed to a great extent in that way.

. . . do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid . . .

If you violate those laws and, for whatever reason, you think you want to go up against the government and become a thorn in its side, God is going to let you pay the

penalty for it. The only justification we have for taking a stance outside of the law is if it violates God's immutable laws. Most of us have not dealt with a whole lot of those circumstances as of yet.

For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

This was always explained within the Church as the scripture that shows that God did give the authority to human governments to enforce their laws of capital punishment and to execute murderers and those who are guilty of capital offenses. It is within their authority to do so. It is not, however, within their authority to declare war for the purpose of greed and power, and to kill and take other lives. Therefore, killing by a government for any reason beyond capital punishment is absolutely outside of its authority.

What about for self-defense of your family? That question often comes up when we start talking about these principles of turning the other cheek, letting God fight your battles for you and acting in faith. There is always the scenarios and someone will bring up, "Well now, wait a minute, what if an armed burglar breaks down my door or comes in through a window in the middle of the night, and threatens the life of my family? Do I not have a right to defend myself? Can I not pull the revolver out of the drawer and blow him away?" Well, there are all kinds of hypothetical scenarios that we could get into, but the answer is this: Proverbs 16:7. "When a man's ways please the [Eternal], he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." If we are doing what we are supposed to be doing, brethren—if we are living up to those laws within the Church and as we conduct our business and our affairs within our lives in the world—we should be avoiding, for the most part, many of these kinds of circumstances. God promises to set His angels about us to protect us.

Notice Exodus 23:20. God promised to fight the battles for Israel. We are spiritual Israel, the Church. Is He not willing and able to give us that protection and that peace? Should we be worried and fretting for our physical safety day after day? Brethren, if we have that faith and confidence and if we are applying ourselves to do the things that we should, then we need not fear. That doesn't mean that we are reckless. It is a good idea to lock your doors and to do things that make common sense, obviously, but human beings always have a tendency to take things to an extreme. Do we have peace of mind that comes from absolute confidence in God's promises of safety?

Exodus 23:20–23. Here is what He promised to Israel, and that means spiritual Israel too, brethren.

Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for My name is in him.

Yes, if we respect that representative of the Father, who is Jesus Christ, and do our level best to obey His laws, then we are promised to have a protector.

But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.

He has absolutely promised to provide us angelic protection if we will fear and obey Him, if we will have the faith to believe and act in time of trial and difficulty and not turn to our own human orientation of defensive moves, but trust Him instead. Then, God will not put us in those hypothetical circumstances where we have to decide whether or not we are going to take a human life in order to spare ourselves or our families. Those are the things we should not be worried about if we are applying ourselves in those spiritual principles that we are commanded to obey.

Let's cover one other principle before closing, brethren. The other problem with getting involved in the military is that you absolutely give up your ability to keep God's laws. I have seen this happen with friends or acquaintances in the Church who have grown up and become of age. They finish high school and they don't know what to do. Maybe they are in a poor family; they don't have any immediate hope for a job. Maybe they look for a job; they can't get one. How many I have seen, then, ultimately default and go into the military because they feel like they don't have any other choice.

They have a guarantee. They listen to the propaganda about how it is going to change their lives and give them the skills they need to do this or that and give them college money and all of that. They have the guarantee of three square meals; a meager, yet steady, paycheck; and somebody to take care of them—passing from their parents to their new parents. Traditionally, the poor fight wars. The military is full of those

who have been disadvantaged and who default and go into the military to look for a leg up when they haven't been able to do it outside.

I have known some who have gotten promises from the recruiter: "Oh sure, we will let you keep the Sabbath." Recruiters will tell you anything in order to get you in, and then when you get into basic training, the first thing they tell you—from what I hear—is, "Forget anything you heard."

Brethren, by coming under the military authority, you lose your ability to make decisions. You do not even have the freedoms that we enjoy as citizens of this country. You come under a different authority. Your rights to keep the Sabbath, let alone the Holy Days, are taken away. You are at someone else's mercy, and you cannot fulfill the law of God in that environment. You just absolutely can't do it. That was the thing that was compelling to me, because as a young man, I thought, *I wish I could figure out a way to get into the military and still not violate God's law.* It is impossible. I recognized that very quickly. Everyone that I have seen try to do it has invariably ended up violating God's law—admittedly. It just doesn't work.

One more scripture, brethren—the one we have already read. Turn back with me to 1 Corinthians 7:22. Remember, the answer to the question of military service is the fact that we are not our own and we have been bought with a price.

1 Corinthians 7:22–23:

For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

We serve men's governments as long as they do not violate the principles of God; but first and foremost, as members of the Body of Christ, our citizenship is in heaven with the Father and the Son. That Family has called us as warriors, to be soldiers for that which lies ahead—a spiritual purpose, brethren.