

Many times temptations raise their ugly heads before us, but with the help of God we can overcome them. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). May the Lord help us to realize the truth of this scripture, for “If a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov.16:7).

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THE CHRISTIAN AND CARNAL WARFARE

BY PAUL O. NICHOLS

Listen to the way the poet, who was evidently a peace loving man, put into verse what he called:

THE CHRISTIAN AND CARNAL WARFARE

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The name Christian in the title has reference to a person who is in covenant relationship with the Heavenly Father, and the theme deals with the relationship between that person and the conflicts of the nations of the world. The subject has nothing to do with what an alien sinner may or may not do, but to the Christian's attitude toward carnal war.

The one who approaches any subject with prejudice or a biased mind is very inapt to derive a great deal of benefit from his investigation. But if one will always study the Bible with the attitude, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth: Command and I will obey," "Not my

The Call To War

*Send me your youth, the best of your youth,
The courageous, clean, and strong,
From city, hamlet, and countryside
Where life is a careless song.
Have him forget his house of dreams
With ivy round the door,
For I have a task for his eager feet,
Wallowing deep in gore.*

*In a heart that's free from brutality,
I will sow the seed of hate
Till he goes forth with a lust to kill
Like a crazed inebriate.
I'll twist his soul with shameful lies
As he carries my banners high,
And prate to him of a sacred cause,
While he stumbles out to die.*

*You've sent me your youth, the best of your youth
A thousand times or more,
And I've left their bones in a shallow grave
On some beleaguered shore.
I've plundered the world and laid it waste,
With youth as my helpless tools.
Each time I call, you send them all,
For you are such hopeless fools.*

We, as Christians, are as out of place engaging in a carnal conflict, as the world would be trying to fight the spiritual fight. The world cannot fight the spiritual warfare without first becoming spiritual, and a Christian cannot fight in a carnal conflict without first becoming carnal.

In this world of turmoil and strife, drenched in a welter of human blood and carnage, how many of us could close our lives on earth as triumphantly and victoriously as some of the characters in the Bible. For instance, look at the apostle Paul who suffered all kinds of adversities, persecutions, afflictions and temptations, but who through every trial was made stronger. When he faced death by decapitation at the hands of the Roman government he was able to say very resolutely. "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day..." (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Or as Stephen, the first martyr of Christ, who fell asleep in the arms of death, praying for those who were murdering him for preaching to them the truth (Acts. 7:59, 60). Or would we be able to do as Jesus did, who was spit on, slapped, beaten with the fists of His enemies, lashed with the Roman whip, and finally crucified; with nails tugging at His hands and feet, and a crown of thorns piercing His innocent brow, He prayed for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The apostle Peter later said, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind" (1 Pet. 4:1).

will, but thine be done," he will be blessed with greater understanding of the will of God. If a person will resolve in his heart to put into practice the things he learns to be the truth, he can be assured of being the recipient of eternal happiness.

I have the deepest sympathy for suffering and sorrowing humanity; for the mothers and fathers who have had sons snatched from their loving bosoms; for the wives who have had husbands torn from their aching hearts; for the girls whose would-be companions, with whom they planned to make a home, were taken from them; for the boys who have been forced into war. It is not with disregard for souls involved in carnal conflicts, but my stand is motivated by a love for truth of God, souls of men and a hope of future happiness beyond this veil of sin and tears.

It is possible for us to deal with hypothetical situations, and many do on this issue, but our hypothetical questions do not change the truth of God's word. The Bible remains as unchangeable as God Himself, "With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1:27). Therefore, we will deal with facts and the duties enjoined upon us. On the spur of the moment or in time of great excitement a person might do something drastically unscriptural, but the situation would not alter the truth nor change the Bible.

The prophet Isaiah, approximately seven hundred years before its fulfillment, uttered this prophecy: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the

mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations flow unto it. 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...and he shall judge among the nations, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isa. 2:2-4). It is true that the people of God under the old Mosaic dispensation fought in wars and God was with them, but this prophet said after the house of the Lord was established, God’s people would “learn war no more.” The house of God is the church (I Tim. 3:15).

Down through the halls of time one can hear the loving voice of Jesus Christ, echoing and reechoing the sermon on the mount, the greatest series of truths that ever fell on the ear of fast decaying morality. Our attention is arrested by verses 43-48 of Matthew chapter 5. Jesus says, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, 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 that 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 the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” He was laying the foundation for the

Surely if he is justified in taking the life of anyone, it would be his enemy. But, no! For Jesus says, “Love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44).

Some seem to think that should a person do them bodily harm or destroy their goods or property, they have a perfect right to retaliate. But the teaching of Jesus is, “Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also” (Luke 6:29). And the apostle Paul said, “render not evil for evil” (1 Thes. 5:15). Again, he said, “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17-21).

The apostle not only told people what to do, but he showed them, as well. For instance, Paul wrote in 2 Tim. 4:14, “Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil, the Lord reward him according to his works.”

The Christian does have a battle before him that he must fight. It is called “the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). This is not a carnal, but a spiritual warfare. “For to be carnally minded is death” (Rom. 8:6). “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal).” So says Paul (2 Cor. 10:3,4). Again, he says, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood” (Eph. 6:12).

in that they have abused their powers and even persecuted and punished faithful Christians. Remember Herod, Pilate and Nero.

Sometimes a war between nations is referred to as “The Cause of God and Man,” but this expression is blatantly unscriptural in its application to such wars. The cause of God is that for which many of the apostles and other Christians suffered martyrdom. That cause is the thing that true ministers of the gospel because of love for God and men are giving their lives to propagate and to which they tenaciously hold and for which we earnestly contend. The true mission of the “Cause of God” is to save souls, and certainly not to destroy lives and property.

Why are not the preachers who believe it a Christian’s duty to kill in battle showing themselves “examples of the believers?” (1 Tim. 4:12). They can stand back and boast that a war is for a sacred cause, or on the sideline coach others, but they themselves would have to be forced, were they to go. If it is good and right, why aren’t they in there? “He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

If there is any Christian who can be justified in killing anyone, who is it. May a Christian kill his wife? Paul says “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph.. 5:25). May a Christian kill his brother in Christ? “We ought to lay down our lives for our brethren” (1 John 3:16). May a Christian kill his neighbor? No, Jesus said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Mark 12:31). Well,

Christian religion for which He was soon to give Himself through excruciating pain and agony on Calvary’s cross. When the tone of love is lost, then comes a discord in the beautiful harmony of the Holy Scriptures, more disagreeable than any discord ever heard by natural ear. In fact, when one loses love, he loses God, “for God is love” (1 John 4:8).

On one occasion Peter whipped out his sword to defend Jesus. But did our Lord condone his actions? No! He said to him, “Put up thy sword into his place: For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matt. 26:52). If a person were justified in defending anyone, it certainly would be Jesus Christ, our Lord. However, Jesus did not justify fighting with carnal weapons, even to defend Him. In fact, He said, “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” (John 18:36). What about fighting for others? When Jesus told Peter to put up his sword, he sheathed the sword of every disciple for all time. And when a Christian takes up a carnal weapon, he does it without the sanction of our Lord, whether it is used offensively or defensively. Remember, Jesus said, “He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt. 10:39).

When John the Baptist came into all the country about Jordan preaching “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, many people came to him desiring this baptism. Among those who approached him were some soldiers “demanding of him, saying and what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man.....”(Luke 3:14). John was preparing the way of the

Lord. (Mark 1:3)

The advocates for Christians going to war and using carnal weapons to fight the enemy run to Romans 13 in an attempt to justify their position. “Be subject to the higher powers... Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation...for he is the minister of God, 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” (Rom. 13:1-4). Such individuals harp loud and long on these verses, but seemingly fail to realize that there might be more truth in this same chapter if they would just check. In verses 8 through 10, the writer says, “Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Those same advocates, like the drowning man clutching at the proverbial straw, grab for 1 Pet. 2:13, 14 in an effort to support their own desires and lusts in the stream of Bible truth. It is true, Peter did say, “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.” But this same inspired man of God said, “We ought to obey God rather than man.” (Acts 5:29). We need to “rightly

divide the word of truth” (1 Tim. 2:15). When God tells me to “love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44), and “Thou shalt not kill” (Rom. 13:9), and man commands me to hate and kill our enemies, I must obey God rather than men. Just as long as a Christian can obey the laws of man without disobeying the commands of God, he should try to abide by them. Christians should be some of the finest citizens of any country. The application that some try to make of 1 Pet. 2:13, 14 and Romans 13 would get Christians into terrible trouble. They seem to forget that the New Testament is for the whole world and is universal in its scope. What it says to Christians in the United States, it also says to Christians in every country. Therefore, if we are to accept the interpretation of some of Romans chapter 13, and the application they make of it, then Christians in one country would be compelled to fight and kill Christians in another country, because they must be “subject to the powers that be.” And consider a civil war, as in the case of the war between the North and the South, in our own country. There were governments set up in both sections. Do the advocates of Christians fighting tell us that the Christians in the North should have killed their fellow Christians in the South, and the other way around. There is but one solution, and that is, that we should obey the laws of the land as long as they do no conflict with the laws of God. Remember, “there is no power but of God” and whatever power civil governments possess was delegated to them by the Lord, who is our King. The civil powers “are ordained of God...For he is the minister of God to thee for good...a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” But those powers do not always stay in their place. They have frequently gone beyond the work God ordained for them,