

Self Defense vs God Defense

In this newsletter, we will be looking at the promises of God. Specifically, the promises of protection.

Self-defense, is it a Right?

Without a doubt, God-sanctioned accounts of self-defense appear in the Bible. But this is not evidence that the practice is appropriate. God also sanctioned a prophet to marry a prostitute and take her back after she left him and broke her vow. He called Abraham to offer his son as a burnt offering, and did not prohibit slavery under His Theocracy. Does this mean we should offer our firstborn children, marry the others off to prostitutes, and promote slavery? There were things that God allowed under the Old Covenant because of the hardness of the people's hearts.

An Example

It is tough for us to understand something without seeing it first. Therefore, God gave us an example of how He wants His children to act.

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."—*John 13:15*.

While this command regarded the ordinance of humility, it also teaches a broader principle. Christ is our example:

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:"—*1 Peter 2:21-23*.

We are not excused to follow a different path than the one marked out by the Son of God. Before Christ, we did not perfectly discern righteousness, but now we have seen what God expects of us:

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"—*Micah 6:8*.

The following question should be sufficient to prove show us what God expects. "Did Christ ever defend Himself?" No? Go and do thou likewise. Unfortunately, a great deal of confusion has arisen

around self-defense because others are preaching their own opinions. They are trying to justify a course of action contrary to Christ's. The unsanctified tendencies of self have been mingled with the truth, and confusion has been the result. Those who act upon this confusion will make faithless decisions. I encourage each of you to look at the example of Isaac. He made a faithless decision and broke one of the Ten Commandments in an effort to protect himself and his wife. The result was that he nearly lost her to King Abimelech, and would have if God had not intervened. We should not deceive ourselves into thinking that breaking the Commandments will lead to safety for us or our family. It provides opportunity for the thief to come kill, steal and destroy.

God is our defense

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God."—*Psalms 20:7*.

In ancient times, people viewed chariots much as we view tanks. Horses were also highly effective in combat. In more than a few battles, cunning use of horsemen turned the tide of the fight. It is no surprise that many people placed their trust in the cavalry and chariots. Here, the psalmist contrasts this with trusting in God's name.

"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man."—*Psalms 118:8*.

The same idea is brought out again in proverbs, through a contrasting parallel.

"The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD."—*Proverbs 21:31*.

Mankind prepares to fight; they prepare horses. As we saw in Psalm 20, the horse is a place of trust for people in the military. People feel safe when they have horses in their army:

"An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength."—*Psalms 33:17*.

Horses have great strength, but all their strength will not profit anyone or keep them safe. God is the only source of safety, as Proverbs 21:31 teaches. This proverb was not an encouragement to acquire many horses in preparation for battle. God

2 specifically warned against multiplying horses.

“But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.”—*Deuteronomy 17:16*.

We are not to return to our godless ways for protection. A gun will not deliver you; it cannot keep you safe. It is a vain thing to trust in; it is better to put your trust and confidence in the Lord. He handed over 135,000 Midianites armed with swords into the hands of 300 men with torches. God can deliver by many or by few, irrespective of whether or not we are armed. To demonstrate this concept, God commanded Joshua to do something specific when all the kings of Northern Canaan came out as one to fight against Israel with their horses, chariots, and army.

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.”—*Joshua 11:6*.

To “hough” a horse means to hamstring it by cutting the tendons in the hind legs. Houghing was historically a tactic used in warfare to disable captured horses, making them useless for battle and preventing the enemy from using them again. It involves severing the Achilles tendon, which makes the animal unable to gallop. Israel could still use the horse for agricultural purposes and for travel, but not for battle. Essentially, houghed horses could be used for survival but not for protection. God severed their reliance upon military might so they would trust in Him. It is very easy to trust our safety to a weapon, but when we do this, we are in more danger than ever. We open ourselves up to death:

“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.”—*Matthew 26:52*.

All who take the sword, placing their confidence and trust in it, will be slain by the sword. They forfeit God’s protection when they take protection into their own hands. The question must be asked: Is it the sword of man, or the sword of Christ that slays them? I think the answer is plain if we consider the following question: If you love your enemies, why do you carry a weapon to kill them?

Traits of the people of God

“LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the Truth in his heart. He that back-

biteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”—*Psalm 15:1-5*.

The Bible tells us that if we do these things, we shall never be moved. The word for “moved” means to waver, fall, or give way. It is found in Proverbs 25:26:

“A righteous man falling (waving) before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.”

God has sent us to be springs of water, springing up into everlasting life.

“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”—*John 7:38*.

We are to refresh others with kind words and Holy actions so that they will see our good works and glorify God. But if we sin in the sight of the wicked, we are corrupting our influence and muddying our spring. If we put our trust in the safety of a weapon what will that tell them about our God? Can He be trusted to deliver us?

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.”—*Isaiah 33:14-17*.

When I was younger, I always thought this verse meant we were to throw rocks down the mountains at our enemies, as the Waldensians did. But the term “munitions” actually means “fortress” or “defense.” The Bible says the fortress/refuge and defense of the righteous is a Rock.

“They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge. And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the LORD our God shall cut them off.”—*Psalm 94:21-23*.

Let’s not forget that we are children to be protected by our Heavenly Father. We can run to Him

when we are in danger, and will He not protect us? God has called us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”—*Matthew 10:16*.

How many sheep have you seen carrying a M1911 to keep the wolves at bay? Other translations of the Bible render the word “harmless” as “innocent.” Therefore, the meaning of Christ can be and often is contested. The Spirit of Prophecy easily clears up any confusion. Ellen White saw the 144,000 in vision, and the angel described them as harmless:

“By the people of God, a voice, clear and melodious, is heard, saying, “Look up,” and lifting their eyes to the heavens, they behold the bow of promise. The black, angry clouds that covered the firmament are parted, and like Stephen they look up steadfastly into heaven and see the glory of God and the Son of man seated upon His throne. In His divine form they discern the marks of His humiliation; and from His lips they hear the request presented before His Father and the holy angels: “I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.” John 17:24. Again a voice, musical and triumphant, is heard, saying: “They come! they come! holy, harmless, and undefiled. They have kept the word of My patience; they shall walk among the angels;” and the pale, quivering lips of those who have held fast their faith utter a shout of victory.”—*Great Controversy*, pg. 636.

What does Jesus say?

Jesus Himself has told us how we are to react to others mistreating us:

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”—*Matthew 5:38-42*.

It is true that the rule, “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (*Leviticus 24:20*), was a provision in the laws given through Moses, but it was a civil statute. The statute was not given to limit vengeance, for God had said:

“Say not thou, I will recompense evil.”—*Proverbs 20:22*.

“Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me.”—*Proverbs 24:29*.

“Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth.”—*Prov-*

erbs 24:17.

“If he that hateth thee be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink.”—*Proverbs 25:21-22*.

“An eye for an eye” was given as a standard of Justice. In the sermon on the mount, Christ called His followers to manifest a different principle. Says the prophet:

“The whole earthly life of Jesus was a manifestation of this principle. It was to bring the bread of life to His enemies that our Saviour left His home in heaven. Though calumny and persecution were heaped upon Him from the cradle to the grave, they called forth from Him only the expression of forgiving love. Through the prophet Isaiah He says, “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” “He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.” Isaiah 50:6; 53:7. And from the cross of Calvary there come down through the ages His prayer for His murderers and the message of hope to the dying thief.

The Father’s presence encircled Christ, and nothing befell Him but that which infinite love permitted for the blessing of the world. Here was His source of comfort, and it is for us. He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. The blow that is aimed at him falls upon the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. **Whatever comes to him comes from Christ.** He has no need to resist evil, for Christ is his defense. **Nothing can touch him except by our Lord’s permission, and “all things” that are permitted “work together for good to them that love God.”** Romans 8:28.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pg. 71.

Encouraging Unbelief?

Oh! If only we had faith in God. The arguments for self-defense include many imaginary scenarios. They say, “What if...” Before imagining all forms of atrocities that could befall a loved one. These doubts are an echo of the voice of the serpent, “What if God is not faithful?” Well, If God weren’t faithful, then we wouldn’t exist to doubt His faithfulness. God tells us:

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”—*Matthew 10:28*.

The way of Christ is belittled, and those who follow His footsteps are told they are not men because they will not violently protect their own. Scripture

4 is twisted to make it appear a Christian duty to perform acts of violence to defend oneself. "It is a disagreeable necessity." "There is such a thing as permissive will; things can happen to you that God has not ordained." But our prophet echoes the Bible when she says: "Whatever comes to him (the obedient Christian) comes from Christ." He who knows how many hairs are on your head is also acquainted with every trial that befalls you. Nothing can befall you that a compassionate heavenly Father has not ordained for your benefit. If our unbelief did not blind us, we would see this. We are to trust that we have a compassionate heavenly Father who is looking out for our own well-being. Do you know how this unbelief and self-sufficiency have crept in? The Bible tells us plainly:

"And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness."—*Isaiah 8:22*.

The eyes of those promoting self-defense have been turned from eternal things to the world. Because wickedness abounds, their love grows cold, and they are willing to send a soul that Christ has paid an infinite cost for to the second death to preserve themselves in this life. Will such selfishness enter the gates of heaven? Is this what it means to love your enemy? To do good to those who hurt you? The Bible teaches that people are not our enemies. We do have a battle to fight, but it is not against flesh and blood. We do have a weapon to wield, but it is not a gun:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with Truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:"—*Ephesians 6:12-17*.

We are to wrestle against principalities and powers, against demons, against sin, but not against man.

"Not in freedom from trial, but in the midst

More Food for the Little Flock —

of it, is Christian character developed. Exposure to rebuffs and opposition leads the follower of Christ to greater watchfulness and more earnest prayer to the mighty Helper. Severe trial endured by the grace of God develops patience, vigilance, fortitude, and a deep and abiding trust in God. It is the triumph of the Christian faith that it enables its followers to suffer and be strong; to submit, and thus to conquer; to be killed all the day long, and yet to live; to bear the cross, and thus to win the crown of glory."—*Acts of the Apostles, pg. 467*.

The book of Hebrews tells us of these trials the Christian must bear. It calls them "something better." This is because we are perfected in the midst of trials.

"And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."—*Hebrews 11:36-40*.

Conclusion

We should not take our own safety and that of our family into our own hands. Trust in the Lord Jesus to be your safety and security.

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."—*1 Peter 4:19*.

The arm of flesh will fail you, but whosoever will trust in the name of the Lord will abide in safety.

For a finished work,



Jonathan Taylor

Wisdom is justified of all her children. -Luke 7:35