

Ethics of Life

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- [0 : 00] Let's open in a word of prayer. Father in heaven, we, once again, we confess our immense thanks that you have shed your love on us through your Holy Spirit.
- ! Lord, we don't deserve these blessings and these things. You give us all we need to know you, to walk with you, to be in your light. And more than that, Lord, you give us this wonderful church, this safe place. You've planted us in this city.
- We pray, Lord, that we would use these gifts for your glory, to spread your kingdom. We pray today, and this moment in particular, that you would give us wisdom about that very difficult question of Christianity and Christians regarding warfare.
- Give us insight. Give us insight into your word, into your calling on our lives as citizens, but also many of us are voters. And we just pray that you give us wisdom in these things, and we pray all this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.
- Amen. Okay, friends. I was here two weeks ago. The original plan was for us to do capital punishment and then warfare, but then some people's schedule got confusculated, and then so I'm two weeks late or a week late. But whereas with capital punishment, we talked about using lethal force against someone who had perpetrated a horrific crime.
- [1 : 24] Today, we're going to be talking about using lethal force that almost by necessity will be used against people who have not committed a crime.
- So this is the idea of warfare. And one definition that distinguishes something like capital punishment from warfare is that warfare is a broader use of force in which very likely some innocent people will be caught up in what is being conducted.
- That's what makes warfare such a difficult question and such a fraught question. As you can tell, perhaps, from this definition of warfare, we could expand this to talk about the use of physical force or violence at all.
- So on the one hand, we could talk about warfare in a broader sense to include all kinds of physical force or violence that, when used, has a somewhat reasonable chance of affecting innocent people.
- I'm speaking about things like certain police work or if you are doing a security operation or if you're serving in the military but in peacetime or issues of self-defense or potentially moments of heroic but violent self-sacrifice, where you see something happening and you decide to do something to prevent a terrible act from occurring.
- [3 : 01] That's perhaps a broader view where you still have this idea of using violence where there's potential for innocence being affected, whereas a narrower definition would limit warfare to simply what we would traditionally think of as a war, like nation-states fighting against one another.
- But all of these questions are bound up in the idea of Christianity and warfare, of Christians and violence. Is it ever appropriate to use violence as if you are a Christian?
- And if so, when and how? What are the reasons why? In our last class that I was teaching with you on capital punishment, the position that I took was that a capital punishment, clearly you see in Scripture that God has mandated it on occasion.

It's not inherently wrong at all times because God did ask it to be carried out at times. But in that class, I didn't take a position on whether capital punishment should be used in our country today.

That's sort of a separate question, and I presented different points of view. Today, on this class on warfare, I'm going to do something a little bit different. Instead of not taking positions or sides on warfare, what I'm going to suggest is that perhaps God can call faithful Christians to different paths regarding a specific instance of warfare.

[4 : 36] That there could be different paths that God genuinely calls Christians that are part of the same community of faith down in terms of whether to be pacifistic or whether to support the war, and if so, how to support the war.

And I'll explain all that as we go. What our outline will be is it'll be similar from the last time I was with you, where I'm going to kind of talk about different passages in Scripture, some of which appear to support the idea that warfare can be just at times under specific circumstances, and then passages that can suggest that, no, Christians are called to a different or higher purpose.

I do this so that you can see perhaps the motives and the reasoning behind Christians who take both sides of the question. Then I want to walk us through a brief history of Christians and pacifism on the one hand, and then Christians and just warfare on the other hand, because it turns out we actually have two great traditions in the church, where on the one hand there will be Christians who argue that the Scriptures support pacifism, and then we have Christians who argue that, no, the Scriptures support that there are times when warfare is justified.

And then I'll present some thoughts on this, and then some lessons that we can draw from what we've learned, and going forward if we're ever faced with very difficult situations like warfare.

Let's get started. What I'm going to do now is put the, you know, a scholar would call this the locus classicus. It's the verse that is sort of the calling card of Christian pacifism.

[6 : 26] It's Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. It's Matthew chapter 5, verse 38. And it's a pacifism.

I'm terrible at spelling. Yeah, I got that right. And Jesus says this, You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist an evil person.

But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him too.

Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. Pacifism takes these verses quite literally. When Jesus says, do not resist an evil person, they take these verses as meaning we should not participate in warfare.

That you should not try to resist an evil person with violence. It's a straightforward reading. If you continue reading Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, you know, Jesus will say things like, Love your enemies.

[7 : 39] Pray for those who persecute you. And the pacifist will say, Jesus meant that. He meant to love your enemies. He meant to do these things. However, you know, someone could point to other things where Jesus says, I say, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is God's throne.

Let your statement be yes, yes, or no, no. Anything beyond this is of the evil one. And someone could reply that I'm not sure he only wants us saying yes, yes, no, no. I think he's getting at the heart of vows you can't keep and taking the Lord's name in vain.

But this is probably the gold star of Christian pacifism is Matthew 538. Of course, though, there are many other verses.

They're counterpoints for the idea of just war. I'm only going to choose one or two. There are certainly probably better ones because especially in the Old Testament, there's so many warfare verses.

But I did want to choose one or two in particular that I thought were particularly thought-provoking. This one is from 1 Samuel 17. And this is, of course, the famous story of David and Goliath, where David goes out.

[8 : 54] The Israelite armies are arrayed in warfare against the Philistines. Goliath, this warrior, is coming out challenging the Israelite armies and defying the God of Israel.

It's very blasphemous. And no warrior is willing to stand before this giant Goliath, this mighty warrior. And David, young David, who's probably just a teenager, he's probably like 15 or something.

And he says he will fight Goliath. And he says, And Saul said to David, And of course, as you all know, David kills Goliath, chops off his head, and earns a great victory.

What is interesting about this is that there is a psalm of David, Psalm 144, where he says, Blessed be the Lord my rock who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle.

He is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.

[10 : 08] So this sort of warrior act or warrior ethos that was exhibited by David is also commemorated in the Psalms.

And that gives it a little more than just a historical account. Sometimes you read the Old Testament, and of course not all the stories of what people do in the Old Testament are meant to give us moral examples to follow.

Sometimes they're actually the opposite. They're supposed to show us how not to do things. But in this case, there's a psalm commemorating David as a warrior and as a fighter.

So that's one counterpoint on the just war side of things. I want to walk through a few others. This one is...

I'm going to go in reverse order here. I'm going to do the just war passage first. Now, some people... We talked about this in the capital punishment class.

[11 : 16] Some people might look at these. A pacifist might respond to this and say, Yes, that's true, but that is the Old Covenant. And in the New Covenant, we are called to higher and better things.

And that's where this passage is interesting. This is in Luke chapter 22. This is towards the very end of Jesus's ministry. I think this is actually the day...

It's the last week of Jesus's life. And Jesus says to the disciples, he sort of gives them a parting warning. And he says, When I sent you out with no money bag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?

This is when he sent out the apostles two by two. And then he sent out the 70. And he asked, Did you lack anything? And they said, Nothing. And he said to them, But now let the one who has a money bag take it, and likewise a knapsack.

So he's warning them, tough times are going to come. And then he says this, And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, and he was numbered with the transgressors.

[12 : 24] He's prophesying his unjust death that's about to happen. And the disciples respond to this, and they say, Look, Lord, here are two swords. And he said, That's enough.

It's a cryptic passage. There's a lot of surprising things about this. One, Jesus tells them to sell their cloak and buy a sword. And then they respond and they say, Actually, we already have swords.

And it looks like the disciples are bringing weapons of warfare around with them, when they're with Jesus, apparently. That's what's going on. But then Jesus also, you know, he doesn't, he says that's enough.

Like, it's almost like he's trying to restrain them at the same time. But still, it's very interesting. Swords, remember, there were no guns back then.

And so bringing a sword was how you would defend yourself when you're on the way between cities and things like that. So that's what they're bringing around, apparently. However, there are some counterpoints here.

[13 : 33] If we keep reading the Gospels, and we come to when Jesus is arrested, this also happens in Luke. So this is just very shortly after Jesus had said about the necessity of bringing a sword.

In Matthew 26, Jesus is arrested. Judas, one of the twelve, comes up with swords and clubs. And Judas gives a sign, and he says, the one whom I kiss is the man, sees him.

And he comes up to Jesus at once, and he says, greetings, Rabbi. And he kisses him, and Jesus says, friend, do what you came to do. And then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. And behold, one of those who were with Jesus, this is Peter, we know from other Gospels, he stretched out his hand, he drew his sword, he struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

So he seems to be doing what Jesus literally just recommended. And then Jesus says, put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? Hmm. Here we have the classic scenario of using violence.

[14 : 53] Jesus has just recommended they buy swords, people are coming to attack them unjustly, a disciple unsheathes his sword and attacks.

Peter does this, and Jesus rebukes him. And we know from other Gospels, he heals the man who had his ear cut off. And then he says, don't you think I could appeal to my Father and he would send twelve legions of angels to take care of all this?

But how then, he says, should the Scriptures be fulfilled that it must be so? There's a partner passage with this. If we keep reading the Gospels, one of my joys is taking the Gospels and weaving them together in chronological order.

If you keep reading and you come to John, oh, I forgot the chapter verse. It's when Jesus is standing before Pontius Pilate. It's verse 36.

I forget the actual chapter. He's standing before Pontius Pilate in the Gospel of John and Pontius Pilate is just mystified that Jesus is not defending himself more, that he's not. And Jesus says this, my kingdom is not of this world.

[15 : 58] If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight that I not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this world. 18. 18.

John 18. Here we have a very fitting partner passage where Jesus explains, hey, my kingdom is not from here. My kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. Otherwise, my servants would be fighting for me.

But I'm part of a greater kingdom, a higher kingdom. So I hope you see the juxtaposition between these passages. It also shows, I think these illustrate the difficulties of these questions because in some sense, I mean, the disciples were carrying swords.

Jesus recommended they get a sword. But then, he also clearly had very strict conditions when you might use these things at minimum.

If you want to go the pacifistic route, you could also argue that perhaps he was saying something symbolically. He didn't mean the use of literal swords. But either way, you see how these questions are very difficult and they're fraught about Christians and violence and Christians and warfare.

[17 : 10] Well, we do have some other very interesting passages that I want to make sure we go through. This is when, this is regards how the New Testament treats soldiers.

And one passage where we find this is in the early passages of the Gospel of Luke. Luke, and I, you know, I cut off the chapter again.

I think it's Luke 4, but it's verse 10. It's 3 or 4, where a crowd is around John the Baptist and they're asking, what should we do?

And he answers, whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none. Whoever has food is to do likewise. Tax collectors also come to be baptized by John and they say to him, teacher, what shall we do? And John says, collect no more than you are authorized to collect.

Chapter 3. Luke chapter 3, verse 10. Then soldiers, Roman soldiers, come to John and they say, and what shall we do?

[18 : 16] And he says to them, do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation and be content with your wages. That's what he says.

He doesn't say abandon your post. He doesn't say never use violence. He just says, don't extort money. Be content with your wages. Soldiers are always rioting in the ancient world.

Be content with your wages. Interesting. Very interesting. Here's another one. You might say, well, that was John the Baptist. You know, we're still technically Old Covenant here.

Maybe that's what he's doing. But there is another parallel case with Jesus. It's not quite as explicit, but in another sense, it's also interesting for different reasons.

This is when our Lord, this is Matthew chapter 8. Our Lord enters Capernaum. That's his home base of ministry.

[19 : 15] And a centurion, so this is an officer in the Roman army. He comes to him and he says, my servant is lying paralyzed at home suffering. And Jesus says, I will come and heal him. But the centurion says, Lord, I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof.

This is a very moving passage. In the Gospels, the full context is that some Jewish leaders come to Jesus and they say, hey, you got to help this guy out.

He's worthy. He's given us money for this synagogue. He's done all this great stuff. He's worthy for you to do this. But then the centurion says, I am not worthy for you to do this for me. He's a man of great humility and faith.

And the centurion says, I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word and my servant will be healed. And this is important for our question here. He says, I too am a man under authority with soldiers under me.

And I say to one, go and he goes and to another, come and he comes and to my servant, do this and he does it. When Jesus heard this, he marveled and he said to those, truly I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.

[20 : 20] I tell you, many will come from the east and the west and recline with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. And to the centurion, Jesus said, go, let it be done for as you have believed, it will be done.

And the servant was healed at that very hour. There are two things here. One is that Jesus is here teaching a centurion, a man in the Roman military and he compliments his faith.

He doesn't rebuke him for his military service. He doesn't tell him, yes, you have great faith, but you do need to do this one important thing. He actually gives him one of the greatest compliments he gives anyone in the scriptures.

And furthermore, the second point is that what has the centurion just said to Jesus? This, this centurion just, the centurion gave an example of how he conducts his life in the military about ordering soldiers.

He says, I tell soldiers to do this and they do it. And that's why I know that you can do this, Lord. So the centurion gives an argument of Jesus's, of his faith in Jesus based on his own military service.

[21 : 43] And Jesus accepts this argument. He says, this is, this man has immense faith. So, hmm, interesting food for thought. But, just like last time, you know, if we wanted to, the pacifists could respond by saying, well, you know, the gospels and the New Testament as a whole call us to higher things.

And often, the New Testament does not explicitly delve into details of social order. You know, it doesn't always as openly condemn slavery as we would hope, for instance.

And perhaps, this is an example where Jesus was, was simply treating the centurion as an individual. He wasn't thinking of the larger social implications of his military service or something like that.

Should we not be thinking of these things in the full unfolding of the gospel and the resurrection of Jesus like Isaiah 9 talks about? Isaiah 9, verse 5 says, this beautiful prophecy of Jesus, for every boot of the trampling warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

For to us, a child is born. To us, a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulders and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

[23 : 10] And of the increase of his government and of peace, there will be no end. The pacifist would say that this should be our goal.

We follow Jesus, the Prince of Peace. And yes, perhaps the centurion, Jesus did not openly condemn the centurion, but we are called to greater things than this.

And Isaiah 9 prophesies such a thing. I think, actually, this now occurs to me, I think I skipped a very important passage.

I don't know why I skipped this. So if you don't mind, I'm going to reverse order here. that argument that, oh, perhaps the centurion was doing something maybe a pacifist might argue not inherently sinful but not what we're called to be doing, if that makes sense.

Sometimes you'll hear these sorts of arguments. We see examples of this with David. Remember, David was called to warfare, but in 1 Chronicles, when he is trying to build God's temple, King David says that, I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and for the footstool of our God, and I made preparations for building, but God said to me, you may not build a house for my name, for you are a man of war and have shed blood.

[24 : 51] And that's in the Old Covenant. So what happens? Solomon, his son, builds the temple and Solomon's name means peace.

He's the one who built it. So, you see sort of the intertwining paths. I have not, I have not articulated a single argument for pacifism.

I mean, there's different kinds of arguments for pacifism. One is an absolutist one where war is never permitted. It's a horrific crime. But there's lesser forms of it. There's the arguments that, well, that's not what we should ever strive for.

It's always defiling somehow. It's never the higher calling. There's also those arguments for pacifism as well. But of course, those who hold to just war have a large number of scriptural passages on their side as well.

For instance, the disciples bringing swords around with them is one of them. Now, what I want to do now is give just a brief overview of the history of pacifism and then a brief overview of the history of just war theology.

[26 : 02] And I'm going to go quickly here. I'm realizing I'm already, I think I'm already going slower than I anticipated. This book, *The Early Church on Killing*, a comprehensive source book on war, abortion, and capital punishment is very useful.

It's a fairly comprehensive collection of excerpts from Christian writings in the first 300 years of the church that have to do with war, abortion, and capital punishment.

And it's well done. The excerpts are from older translations, so they can be a little difficult to follow. The reason why this is important is because when you look at the history of pacifism, there are two main streams of thought.

One is the Anabaptists, the other is the early church. both of them were pacifistic. In fact, the early church was almost universally pacifistic.

And I wanted to read to you just some quick highlights from the early church so you can get a sense of the passion that the early church had for not practicing warfare.

[27 : 07] Remember that these Christians are writing at a time when no Christian is in governmental power, they're being sometimes horrifically persecuted. So here we go. Athenagoras of Athens, he's writing in the year 180, he articulates that Christians oppose abortion, infanticide, gladiatorial contests, and then he says, how then, when we do not even look on gladiatorial contests, lest we should contract guilt and pollution, how then should we put people to death.

Tertullian in 225, he denounces gladiatorial contests, but he goes even further and he insists, quote, God puts his prohibition on every sort of man killing.

Tertullian, I love Tertullian, but he was about as extreme as you can get. Tertullian even argues that the shedding of human blood cannot be forgiven. But what he probably means by that is not that God won't forgive it, but that the church can't forgive it.

In other words, you're permanently excommunicated. Still very harsh, extremely harsh, but that's Tertullian for you. Minucius Felix, writing around the year 200, he says, to us, as Christians, it is not lawful either to see or to hear of human slaughter.

Origen, in 254, unequivocally insists that under no circumstances should Christians kill. And he says, he warns Christians, quote, lest because of warfare or the vindication of our rights or for any occasion we should take the sword, there is no such occasion that is allowed by the gospel teaching.

[28 : 57] We must use the sword against no one. That's what Origen said. He says, and I quote him here, nowhere does Christ teach that it is right for his own disciples to offer violence against anyone, however wicked they might be.

Christ did not deem it in keeping with his laws to allow the killing of any individual whatever. Cyprian, writing in 258, he insists that manslaughter is a mortal crime.

He says, he's referring to his flock and he says, we are of those who, quote, may not kill but who must be killed. And he's writing in this time of terrible persecution.

It goes on. I could keep going here. You know, Lactantius around the year 300 says, Christians are ignorant of war. They are friendly to their enemies. They do not commit war or commit murders.

Putting someone to death is wrong, he says. Lactantius says, every kind of killing is wrong. Abortion, infanticide, exposure of newborn children, gladiatorial contests, capital punishment, and warfare, he believes, are all wrong.

[30 : 08] He even says that it is wrong to accuse someone of a capital crime because it makes no different, quote, whether you put a person to death by word or by sword.

That's how intense these people were. They were straight down the line. Our first, one of our earliest church orders, this is a church manual of how you baptize, how you do the Eucharist, how you bring in new members, and this church order says that those who are gladiators or teach gladiators or teach swordsmanship or teach military skills or weapons training, they should stop or they will be excluded from baptism.

So the early church was very, fairly universal in this. However, we do have examples, if I can give a counterpoint to this, we do have examples of Christians serving in the military in the early church.

That does come up. Tertullian, he's one of the harshest guys on this. He even talks about one of these situations where he compliments the Christian soldiers. So it's not totally universal, but there is a quote, if I can find it, that the author of this volume, this author of this volume put together, he says, and I think this is fair, he says that in all of our hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of pages of writings that we have from the early church, there is not a single statement that explicitly allows Christians to serve in the military.

They're either silent on it or they're negative on it. Yes? All of these individuals who have made this pretty clear past this commentary, have any of them written on Luke 22?

[32 : 01] So, Origen has some homilies on Luke 22. No, he has some homilies on Luke. I don't know if the homilies cover Luke 22. That would be a great question to ask, especially because when Origen said those statements, he was talking about the Matthew 26 passage where Jesus says, those who use the sword will die by the sword.

So, I don't know if he then went and looked at that one. Ivor. Yeah. I was kind of drafted and I joined the Navy to avoid the Army.

Okay, yeah, yeah. And my ship, the Enterprise, was doing close air support of the Marine Corps. Yeah. And I was part of the ship.

So, that makes me combat veteran. Yes. Yeah. So, according to what you're saying, I could be included from church services for serving when my government kind of forced me into the military?

I don't think that. Yeah. But, there are people in the early church who would have said that. Okay. That would exclude members of this congregation.

[33 : 12] It would also exclude members of our families who serve in the military. My nephew is in the military right now. And, my grandfather and many of my ancestors served in the military.

They took a really extreme position of which I'm going to, we're about to turn to the just war theory. So, I don't want to end on this note.

There is another point of view here that I'm about to present. I will also say about the early church that I think all of those quotations, though they are very powerful and all-encompassing, they are not as universal as you think.

If you read the early church, you understand that we, the actual on-the-ground work of the local churches, there are soldiers in those churches.

We know that from archaeological excavations. We know that from other, from, from, um, Christians, writers who will mention Christian soldiers in the service of Rome.

[34 : 18] Uh, we know that this happened. We know that it was fairly common. We know that they were welcomed in. So, while the quotations that we have universally support pacifism, we know that as a whole that was not what the early church actually did all the time, if that makes sense.

Peter? Um, this time period, I'm not great with my church history, is also, uh, during the time where there was active persecution by the military of the Christians.

Yep. And could that be the reason why they say, don't be in the military because they're going to be ordered to kill fellow Christians? And, and there was often forced pagan worship in the military, where you had to swear allegiance to the genius of Caesar, the spirit of Caesar and worship him and do incense to the emperor as a show of loyalty to the empire.

That is a huge factor and, and people will say that. Another factor is, uh, this sounds really extreme, but remember, these are people who are being slaughtered for their faith at times and they are saying very similar things to every Christian that, so a soldier, you might respond and say, well, if I'm a soldier, that means I have to die.

But they're saying that because if I abandon my post, I'll be executed. But they are saying the same things to so many other non-soldiers who are in very similar circumstances.

[35 : 39] So they're not singling out soldiers for having to risk something terrible to leave. This is for everybody. Everybody's doing all of this.

So, while it is extreme, you have to remember they're, they're casting this net over pretty much the whole flock. Um, there are, remember that women had almost zero rights in the Roman Empire.

A Roman male citizen could execute his wife or children. He could do that. They had slaves. You would have, if you were a pastor in a church, you're going to have slaves who go home and get raped by their masters.

You're going to have people who are horribly beaten by their fathers with no recourse at all. This is just, people who are signed up for the gladiatorial contest and compelled to go and be slaughtered.

I mean, all of these things are happening. So, uh, they, they're living in really terrible times. So, that does breed extremism by necessity. By necessity. So, keep that in mind.

[36 : 38] Um, final point, and this will be our transition. Uh, I, I want to honor and, and, and be inspired by the faith of our Christian forebears in the early church.

But, it is one thing to say these, when you're, these, these kind of statements when you're not in power, it's another thing to be in power and allow violence to be perpetrated against innocent people.

And, that brings in just war theory. And, it turns out that for 300 years, Christians were not in power in the Roman Empire. And, then an emperor comes along named Constantine who became a Christian.

And, he declared freedom of religion. Often people say he made Christianity the official religion. He didn't. He declared freedom of religion. He said, you cannot persecute people due to their religious beliefs.

It's one of the most extraordinary sociological statements ever. That he, he was the one who, who really initiated this for the first time. And, all of a sudden you have a Christian in power.

[37 : 38] What do you do? And, this is where just war theory begins. And, the question that those in power who are Christians ask is, should we let evil go unopposed?

C.S. Lewis wrote an essay. It's in the book *The Weight of Glory* and it's titled *Why I Am Not a Pacifist*. And, he wrote it in World War II.

And, he says, does anyone suppose, so he's referring to Matthew 538 where our Lord says, do not resist an evil person. He says, does anyone suppose that our Lord's hearers understood good his words to mean that if a homicidal maniac attempting to murder a third party tried to knock me out of the way that I should stand aside and let him get at his victim?

And, C.S. Lewis, it's a complicated essay but he makes some good points. But, he highlights that issue of, is Jesus here talking about personal, personal vendettas and vengeance here or is he talking universally about the use of violence to protect the innocent?

And, C.S. Lewis would say, he's talking about personal, personal vendettas and vengeance and things like that. He is not saying, hey, if you happen to be a police officer and you see some wrong happening, don't do anything.

[39 : 09] That's not what he's saying. Yes, Iver? C.S. Lewis lived through the blitz. Yeah, he was World War I in the trenches. Yeah, and World War I in the trenches.

And the blitz as well, yes. Yeah, so, the blitz, six months, bombs were dropped from the sky every night. Yeah, he knew what he was talking about.

He lived through the blitz. Yeah. And I think that colors what he believes. Yes, I agree. I agree. So, all of a sudden, when does just war theory first get articulated?

Well, it starts becoming articulated when Christians finally get into power and they realize that, hey, we can't just like let wrongs happen here. So, the major proponent of just war theory, the first one is Augustine and his words are then the next major, or there's many major proponents of it, but there's Augustine and then there's Thomas Aquinas.

Augustine says, or he suggests that loving our neighbor can mean self-defense of the state. He said, Augustine suggests that loving our foreign neighbors may mean using force to punish evildoers or to right a wrong.

[40 : 23] Thomas Aquinas writes, he says, true religion looks upon as peaceful, so he says, true religion looks upon as peaceful those wars that are waged with the object of securing peace.

So, Thomas Aquinas says, it is peaceful to wage wars in order to secure peace, but he says they should not be waged for motives of greed or cruelty, but instead for punishing evil, securing peace, and uplifting the good.

Thomas Aquinas argued, and you will see his words being used by many theologians since, but Thomas Aquinas argued that for a war to be just, he had three categories, he said, for a war to be just, it has to be carried out by someone in the proper authority.

He says, it's not for individuals to declare war on people. It has to be done through the proper authorities, that's number one. Number two, he said, that it needs a just cause.

Your cause needs to be just. He says, a just cause is required, namely, those who are attacked should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault, to right a terrible wrong, to protect people who are being slaughtered.

[41 : 53] Those are why you should carry out a just war. In fact, Aquinas quotes Augustine, where Augustine says that a just war should be described as one that avenges wrongs when a nation or state must be punished for refusing to make amends for the wrongs inflicted on its subjects or to restore what that state has seized unjustly.

So you're trying to prevent this state from inflicting wrongs, you're trying to prevent them from doing so in the future, you're trying to recover what was lost, you're trying to do something like this.

And then third, he says that you also need to have what he says, just intent. And this is very perceptive of him because he says it's not enough to have just cause because you can come up with a just cause why you need to invade a country, but if you're really just wanting to get rich off their stuff, that doesn't count.

You have to have the just intent. Now, in our society today, we could perhaps add to this and maybe show how things are complicated.

Proper authority, well, that's difficult in a democracy. It's also difficult if you find yourself in a terrible situation where you're witnessing a violent crime.

[43 : 20] Maybe we don't call it warfare, but you might have to do something that could risk harming others. So this is a little bit more complicated. Another issue is the issue of, we heard this in the wars today, in the war in Gaza, proportionality.

So some people think that just wars should be proportional, but people will define what they mean by that differently. Some people will say that a just war should be proportional.

They should only carry out violence to the extent that violence had been carried out by the evildoer. Other people say, no, that's not what proportionality means. Proportionality means that the violence that you use should be proportional in order to stop the future evil from happening.

So that might mean you do have to escalate the violence, but only because that's proportionally required to prevent the evil from continuing to occur. Do you see the two differences there?

So one difference, if some tribe goes and kidnaps 10 people or kills 10 people from another tribe, the victim tribe would only be allowed to kill 10 other people in one interpretation of proportionality, in another interpretation, the victim tribe would be able to do as much violence as necessary to prevent the killing from continuing.

[44 : 40] Does that make sense? Those are two very different positions. And then another issue is the fog of war.

This is a really big issue, knowing what is actually happening. And I'll use an example here. In our day and age, is there a famine in Gaza or not?

People debate about whether that's happening. And if it is happening, is it caused by Israel? If so, is it caused intentionally? Or is it caused by Hamas? Because they're trying to curry favor with people.

This is the fog of war. How you answer those questions will affect your position on whether the war in Gaza was just or not. Or if it's continuing the nature of it continuing after two years is just.

And it's the fog of war. We don't always know what's happening. I'll give an example. I read a book to my kids called The Great Escape. Wonderful book, really gripping read.

[45 : 41] It's about this amazing World War II escape story from a POW camp. And it's these British officers who are in a Nazi prisoner of war camp in Germany.

And they're trying to escape and they hate the Nazis and a lot of the soldiers, the German guards are jerks and everything. But it turns out the Nazi officer who was in charge of the camp was actually like you're reading this and he comes up every now and then and you're like this guy is a nice guy.

He's watching out for the soldiers. He's not taking advantage of them. And I looked him up and he was a very interesting guy. He opposed the Nazis when they came to power.

But then he was a military man. But then when the war started he was conscripted into the service. So he decided to serve. And they put him in charge of a POW camp I'm sure because they didn't trust him.

Probably because they didn't want him on the front lines because they didn't trust his loyalty. So they made him in charge of this POW camp. And he acted justly towards the prisoners.

[46 : 48] He never took advantage of them, never abused them. And there was an incident when the Nazis were losing the war where an order came down warning the head of the camps that hey we might give an order any day now where we're going to ask you to execute all the prisoners.

And the German officer got this order and he turned and said to his fellow officers well I guess we will just have to die because he was going to refuse to do it.

And after the Nazis lost and all the Nazi officers were arrested, they're soliciting evidence for their war crimes and the British POW soldiers said no that guy didn't do anything.

He was good and he was released. And so here we have this example of how difficult it is. The fog of war question comes up because the question is did he know about the concentration camps the Nazis were doing?

I mean I'm not a World War II expert. I do know that many people were unaware of these things or they heard about them but didn't believe them. They thought there were propaganda. propaganda is happening all the time. What do you believe?

[47 : 53] I don't know. But we have an instance of a man in a terrible situation. He's conscripted into the army. If he doesn't serve he might die. And it's just a very hard situation to be in.

On the other hand we have another example in World War II. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. One of our beloved theologians who opposed the Nazis as a German pastor and attempted to assassinate Hitler.

So he took the exact opposite tactic in the same war. And this just gets at the messiness of warfare.

warfare. We could go on and on for hours and do many passages about this and many lessons to draw. But I want to close with several lessons to draw from the scriptural passages on pacifism and those on just war and theories of just war and theories of pacifism.

one is that I think we can fairly conclude that God can call a faithful Christian to use a just form of violence in certain circumstances.

[49 : 05] However, I believe God can also use a Christian, God can also call a Christian to pacifism in certain circumstances. It depends on your calling.

It also depends on the circumstances. One thing though, that is universal for all Christians is we are called to lay our life down for our neighbors and even for our enemies.

We are called to love our enemies. We are called to deny ourselves and follow him. We may not all be called to the same thing with respect to a given war. God called David to warfare.

God called Solomon to peace. I think that perhaps we should have in our mind and in our hearts what the apostle Paul recommended regarding those who differ on certain matters or I think who are called to do different things.

This is in Romans chapter 14 where Paul says, who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. He will be upheld for the Lord is able to make him stand.

[50 : 16] Now Paul goes on to give an example about celebrating different days and marking different holidays as sacred. He says, one person esteems one day as better than another while another esteems all days alike.

Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day observes it to honor the Lord. The one who eats eats in honor of the Lord since he gives thanks to God. While the one who abstains abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

I think we could say much the same about many instances of people differing in a matter of whether a war is just or what we are called to do in a specific terrible situation. Like if Connecticut was invaded all of a sudden.

I'm sure we would be called to do different things at different times. And both of these could involve laying down our lives and sacrificing ourselves.

Whether it's serving as a soldier or whether laying down our lives to love your neighbors or to minister to the wounded or whatever your call may be. Kunle gave me this great example of the body of Christ.

[51 : 24] Paul talks about how we are all part of one body but we're not the same parts. And if you push that analogy, you think that, you know, there are things you would do with your feet that you would never do with your tongue or with your nose.

There's things that would horribly defile you if you were doing it with your tongue but you could do it with your feet. You could walk all over the ground. You're not going to lick the ground. And Kunle was like, that's the way it is with Christians.

That there's some things that some Christians just can't do and aren't called to do. It's not out of weakness. It's that they are not called to do it. But then there's other things that some are called to do. And I think we can use David and Solomon as an example of these things.

Okay, it is 9.55 so we have time for one or two questions if any of you have it. Yes? How does just war in corn support technological advances?

I know. Yes, I know. our tax dollars go to like we have, I think our, they say that the largest air force in the world is the United States and the second largest air force is the U.S.

[52 : 54] Navy because our military is so huge. how does technological advancement affect this? That is a great question. Remember, guns are a technological advancement and so when Jesus is talking about swords, he wasn't, you know, take a sword with you.

There's a genuine debate. If he was in the 20th century, would he say take a gun or is gun just way too over the top? You know, way too over the top. It's not what he was talking about.

And then, of course, there's, I mean, there's no way I can answer this question in just a few seconds. It's just, it affects everything we do. I mean, violence is all around us. We have the weapons now to kill millions of people.

Someone who's completely untrained can do unbelievable amounts of damage, whereas in the ancient world, that really was not possible. If you were, most people, it would be very hard to kill more than one or two people, no matter how hard you tried, because you'd be stopped.

If you were a very skilled, strong person, you could do a little more, but it's going to be hard. And now that is just not the case. And it's not just weapons, it's also things like cars and trucks. I mean, you could do all sorts of horrible things with these instruments of technology.

[54 : 08] Yeah, it's tough. Let's conclude in prayer, and then I'll be here for a few more minutes if you want to chat. Father, we thank you for your word.

Lord, we live in a violent society, in a society where violence is a push of a button away, where instead of going to gladiatorial contests, we can view people dying on the internet in our pockets.

Lord, we pray that you would help us to guard our hearts, to dedicate ourselves to you. We pray that you would help us to lay our lives down for our enemies, to be bearers of the cross of Christ, to not walk the way of the world.

Lord, we pray that if warfare comes or these difficult choices come, that you would help us to act not as the world, but to live for a future kingdom, Lord, whatever your calling may be, whether to serve in the military or not, that we would serve you ultimately above all.

And we pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Thanks, folks. Thank you.