

Faith and Pacifism

When dealing with a subject such as this we can come across many arguments 'for' and 'against', but we really have to make up our minds ourselves as to where exactly we sit with our consciences. But first we have to hear all the arguments both 'for and against' to make up our minds. I want first to examine the arguments before giving my personal response to this very interesting topic.

As believers we are at some point in our lives going to come across something that will make us emotionally charged and angry, we simply cannot leave it be, we have to get involved. It may be an act of violence against a loved one, or an act of injustice from the government, or an act of complacency in the face of a famine, by a nation that has everything, whatever it is it warrants a response and that response can only be measured by the type of person you are, whether highly emotional or laid back. Which ever it is something in your life will trigger it off.

But you might say to me that the Christian should be temperate in all things (1 Cor 9:25) but the world, nor life itself is just black and white, there are always grey areas and we never respond the way we think we will. For instance in the Garden of Gethsemane Peter, seeing the soldiers take his master (Jesus) took his sword and chopped off the ear of one of the servants of the high priest (Math 26:51), likewise when the servant girl recognised Peter warming himself by the fire, Peter again came up with a sudden response and denied Jesus three times, even after Jesus had told him he would, in Mark 14:29 he said "even though all may stumble, yet I will not"

We never know just how we will act in such situations. But what if we are called for war, how will we then respond, well some will take the pacifists view, and refuse, while others will not and will go, but which is the right thing to do? Well some people will take an exclusively pacifist view of both war and violence of any kind, but a completely pacifistic position can not be sustained Biblically, Paul teaches the church in his letter to the Romans that 'civil authority is God's servant for good' He goes on to warn believers, that worldly government has been given divine authority to enforce justice, using if necessary deadly force.

He goes on to say "But if you do wrong, be afraid, for He does not bear the sword for nothing, he is God's servant, an agent of wrath, to bring punishment on the wrongdoers" (Rom 13:4). Furthermore, when John the Baptist was asked a question about the Kingdom He replied to the soldiers, "Don't extort money, and don't accuse people falsely. And be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14) Here he plainly does not inform them that they should lay down their arms, just in modern language 'If your going to be a soldier be an honest one'.

Now whilst I know that the weapons of our warfare are spiritual, and not the weapons of the world, an enthusiasm for war is both foolish as well as it is unscriptural, it was also a point that many Roman soldiers were Christians until they were purged from the ranks by Diocletian as he waged war on Christianity everywhere, they obviously had no qualms about remaining in the ranks as believers. Certainly not whilst they were

allowed to remain as believers, but when persecution came there was many stories of their bravery in the face of difficult hostile situations.

But many Pacifists would say that Jesus commanded forgiveness in Math 18:22, He offered the Christian ideal of humility and meekness, instead of the pagan ideal of power and strength. He gave the command “Whoever smites you on the right cheek turn the other also” (Math 5:9), but I will argue that does not at all make Him a total pacifist.

If we look at what Jesus is saying in Luke 22: 35-38 Jesus encourages His disciples to sell their garment and buy a sword if he hasn't got one, why? Because in faith we are to imitate Jesus, because faith is spiritual, also in love we are to imitate Jesus, but what we have to realise is that regardless of our intentions there are just sometimes on this earth when to be those things is not enough.

But in this passage I believe what is being said is, as long as it lies within you keep these rules, but there will be occasions when you will not be able to keep them because of evil men and circumstances, then you will need your sword. Why? Because as it states in verse 37 “things concerning me have an end” Jesus knew about the battle of Armageddon He knew about the problem with light and darkness, He knew that it would not always be possible to turn the other cheek, also He knew that the Kingdom of Heaven that He delivered, would be challenged by the kingdom of darkness, and to protect His Kingdom at times we would have to use the sword.

If good men and brave men had taken the pacifist position in 1948 we would doubtless be under the Nazi jackboot by now, and the Kingdom of God would be threatened, because if there is no one to preach the gospel there would be no Kingdom. This is what Jesus meant by His saying Math 11:12 when He said “The Kingdom suffers violence, and the violent take it by force” that is not to say the men taking a pacifist position were not brave, they were.

But in matters of conscience we will all never agree as one, simply because we are not clones, God made us individuals and some will make the right choice for wrong reasons, as some will make the wrong choice for right reasons. But His Kingdom will survive and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Math 16:18) and this is why He said in Luke 22:38 when a disciple said “Here are two swords, and He said to them, It is enough”

In things concerning faith and pacifism we have to understand what the difference is. I believe that the Old Covenant teaches that it is possible to use force to restrain evil in the world such as the defence of a nation however, in matters concerning faith we must never use force, but be prepared to suffer for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake but if you are being attacked by a evil doer then we have the right to use all necessary force to restrain him or her. But in the case of being attacked because of what you believe, then you must turn the other cheek.

This is precisely where Christendom has gone very wrong, the Bible as I see it does not preach pacifism and because that's what is believed a Christian should be, the church just does nothing but take a pacifist position in the face of all kinds of ridicule from evil people. They do nothing about it because they believe that Jesus taught

pacifism which He did not, we simply have to draw the right conclusions about different things. Pacifism in some cases is just down right cowardice; Jesus said “No man can do more than give his life for his friend”

So whether it's in the arena of war or just standing up for the faith that verse is true. So the ideal is to “Love one another as I have loved you” but we can never always live up to the ideal, even though we try very hard. Because the way to see evil triumph, is when good men do nothing!! We stand by and watch all kinds of evil appear in our land and do nothing!! We watch our faith being trampled under the feet of Atheists and Pagans alike and do nothing!! This life is full of choices, we make good ones, and we make bad ones, but we will have to choose one way or another, depending on the circumstances.

Doing nothing is not an option. Brave men make choices and live with them, and work out the consequences with Almighty God, knowing that He loves us with a perfect love. Jesus was never seen committing violence because He was the second Adam and it behoved Him to fulfil all righteousness to complete the plan of salvation.

But when He returns the Bible says He will rule like His father David, with a rod of iron (Rev 2:27) We do not see a pacifist here, rather we see a man of righteousness and integrity, a man of compassion for the weak, a man of love for the law of God, this is the Jesus we are expecting, this is the real manhood, this is the Messiah Jesus we always knew would come, and we pray for it.

But for now we are content to invent a fictitious character such as the super hero's of the marvel comics like Batman, Superman, etc anyone who will judge this life on earth and bring about righteousness, friends it's our job the church has to stand up and be counted, but we can't because we are locked in a mental prison called Pacifism. But it's based on a bad premise, and the devil is having a field day, it's the premise that says ‘Gentle Jesus meek and mild’ we throw the ball back in God's court and say if we do nothing long enough God will step in again; we look incessantly for revivals that will not come.

Friends we have to stop playing church and start being church, God will not bail us out anymore. Rather He says “I know your works, because you are neither cold nor hot, I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth.” Yes this is the Laodicean age, the age of complacency where it's easier to fall out amongst ourselves than fall out with evil, Pacifism is the hallmark of the Laodicean age, it's the age where we sit back and do nothing, and just wait for the rapture. Oh God will pull us out before it gets too hot!! But what God really says is;

“I counsel you to buy from Me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love I chasten therefore be zealous and repent” (Rev 3:15-19)