

A
THEOLOGY
of
DEFENSE

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inContext

Background: When Adam Fell, He Fell Far

- Cain and Able are born a few years after expulsion from the garden.
- Cain murders Abel.
- Cain is cursed (different from Adam & Eve): you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.
- Cain complains his punishment is too great; the Lord said, therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain so that no one finding him would slay him.
- Cain's 5th son is Lamech

GENESIS 4:23-24

Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice, You wives of Lamech, Give heed to my speech, For I have killed a man for wounding me; And a boy for striking me; If Cain is avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

- The hubris of man is just beginning
- By Genesis 6: Only Evil all the Time

GENESIS 6:5-7

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

Turn the Other Cheek

MATTHEW 5:38-48

"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 two. "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Cont. Turn the Other Cheek

- So-called *lex talionis* or *talionic justice* - retaliation justice equal to the injury suffered - originates in Jewish law
- Differentiate between governing officials vs. individuals "getting even" or pursuing vengeance
- This and other insults Jesus mentions (take your shirt, forces you to go one mile, one who asks of you) are not acquiescence to violence or personal harm.
- I.e., slap *ῥαπίζω* *slapping with an open hand*; more likely a personal insult here, some think it referred to what we might call a backhanded slap.
- I.e., when insulted, you don't have to insult back.

Rescue and Defense

- Abraham rescues Lot, Genesis 14:13-16
- Many times, people fled or escaped danger. They didn't merely let someone commit violence against them.
- David flees Saul 1 Samuel 19:10
- Paul fled those who tried to kill Him 2 Corinthians 11:32ff after he listed all the sufferings and beatings he endured, he notes he was let down in a basket through a window to escape.
- Jesus slipped away from His home synagogue where they intended to throw Him down a cliff, Luke 4: 28-30;
- Jesus hid from being stoned John 8:59
- Jesus eluded their grasp John 10:39

Many times, people were prepared to defend

- David, while fleeing, essentially assembles a group of security 1 Sam. 22:2ff. You'll remember in this same chapter Doeg the Edomite kills 85 priests with the sword along with men, women, children, infants, and even livestock.
- Throughout Judges, one of if not the darkest time of Israel's history, the Judge was to lead men into fighting to possess the land God had given them.
- In the OT when God commanded them to wipe out a people group, we wince in horror – as we should – but we must acknowledge God knew these enemies hated God's people, hated YHWH, and would have destroyed the Israelites. I believe that they had knowledge of the God of the Hebrews enough to turn from their idolatrous ways.
- While Jesus on occasion instructed His disciples not to be armed, other times He did not prohibit it. Rather, one could argue, it was for good measure.

LUKE 22:33-39

But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me." And He said to them, "When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'And He was numbered with transgressors'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment." They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough." And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples also followed Him.

- In Luke 9 & 10 Jesus told the disciples to take nothing. The lesson there was clearly: depend on Me
- But in Luke 22 He tells them to be armed.
- Can we conclude this was for safety, good measure?
- We may not subscribe to ever using a weapon as a deterrent, but in a hand-to-hand combat situation, I'd argue there could be a sense that a sword on your hip might discourage would-be robbers or those who would bring violence? We no longer leave keys in our cars; we lock our doors, and many of us have security systems... (which may include a few guns?)

Obey the Laws of Men

Romans 13 is an important treatise on obeying authority.

Currently, the laws of our country allow you to own a firearm, to bear arms. According to Paul, if we do so with good behavior we have no fear of government. So to the question of whether or not we commit murder, I'd argue you are lawfully abiding, and as such have the right to defend yourself or others who are victims.

Murder, by definition, includes provisions such as

- Premeditated (intent to kill formed before the killing) and intentional killing of another person
- A killing while committing or attempting any first-degree murder, terrorism, arson, rape, robbery, burglary, theft, kidnapping...
- A killing committed by use of a bomb
- the crime of unlawfully and unjustifiably killing another under circumstances defined by stature
- such a crime committed purposely, knowingly, and recklessly with extreme indifference to human life

1 PETER 2:13-17

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Shepherding God's Flock

You don't see this explained much but I think there's a good argument to be made of a metaphorical and literal application.

- A cursory look at Ezekiel 34 is pretty chilling:
 - God rebukes the shepherds for feeding themselves but ignoring the flock.
 - The flock scattered and He holds the shepherds accountable
 - Though Ezekiel doesn't mention the rod and staff, these were offensive and defensive weapons.

ACTS 20:28-31

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

- Certainly, the primary focus is spiritual care but the term "be on guard" is wrought with concern, care, and devotion. Additionally, the term "Not sparing" (the flock) is used regarding God—who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him over for us—clearly speaking of not sparing His life.
- Extra-biblical Epistle of Barnabas used the term with life/death in mind:
"But he himself desired to suffer in this manner, for it was necessary for him to suffer on a tree. For the one who prophesies says concerning him: "Spare my soul from the sword," and "Pierce my flesh with nails, for bands..."
- Finally: A shepherd is willing to lay down his life for others

JOHN 10:11-15

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 "He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. 14 "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Of course, this does not endorse self-defense or concealed carry literally. But it surely can be applied when you train, invest time, watch over the flock, watch over those who live unaware of their surroundings...is there not a clear sense that you are willing to run down a hallway, to put your life in jeopardy for a person who is vulnerable?

Food for Thought

Several years ago I took a Small Arms Training Class taught by a dear man named Jim. Jim is a deacon in a Baptist church. If memory serves, the class was 2 nights a week for 3 weeks. The first night, he asked how many had shot a gun, how many had their conceal permit, how many were taking the class because they had been a victim... so on.

Then he asked, "by a show of hands, how many of you are willing to take a life to protect yourself or another person from harm?" It was very quiet and a few of us meekly raised our hands. After a pregnant pause, he said, "If you didn't raise your hand, why are you in this class?"

He took a keen interest in why a pastor would take a class like this and we became friends. One evening, he brought in the DA – it was fascinating. He dazzled us with a number of stories about his escapades, then he said something that surprised me. He said,

"I'm glad you are taking this class. I wish every person who owned a firearm took this class because when you call 911, all it means for us is paperwork. It's over. It's too late." And if that weren't enough, he said,

"If you do everything right, by the book, you shoot and perhaps kill or wound a person who is committing a felony, a crime against another person, if you do everything right, it may cost you 2 -3 years of legal hassle and north of \$300,000.00

And then he had a pregnant pause and said, "But what's it worth to save a life?"