

Dear Reader,

It appears as far as the **Iraq war**, we are on the same side. I agree that **no Christian should participate in this war of killing of the Iraqi people because it is an unjust war and it is not self defensive**. In this war, all Christians should be pacifists.

I admire your stand on pacifism that no Christian should take another life even against an enemy. On a personal level your belief is correct and very scriptural. But Christ's teaching about loving your enemy is for the individual Christian and the Church, not the government or state. In Romans 13:4 Paul says God has given the sword to the government to slay evil doers and to defend against enemies that would destroy the State. The Lord expects the State to defend itself against foreign enemies and criminals and even kill them in self defense if necessary.

**The question is this: is it ever right for a Christian to be a soldier and kill a human enemy of the State to defend the State?** You would probably say, "No, never. It is always wrong for a Christian to kill an enemy, even in defense of others." But what about the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself?" If the Good Samaritan was there when the thieves attacked his Jewish neighbor, would it be right for him to stand quietly by and let the thieves kill his neighbor? Sure, he would love his enemy, but at the same time would he not hate his neighbor when he could save and protect him and he didn't? The theology of war is more complex than you understand. When the two commands collide, loving your neighbor and loving your enemy, what are you to do?

If we were attacked on our soil by the Chinese and they were slaughtering helpless women and children neighbors, would you stand idly by and do nothing to protect your neighbors, but let them be slaughtered so you could love the Chinese butchering them? Would you not hate your neighbors if you did nothing to defend them when you could protect them by killing the enemy? Would you let the enemy kill your Mom and Dad and brothers and sisters in cold blood and not try to defend them even with your life by killing the enemy? Or would you let them kill your family in cold blood and do nothing or "hate" your family just so you could love your enemy?

**Jesus' command to love your enemy is when you are personally attacked and forced to do something to help your enemy.** He does not speak of letting the enemy kill you willingly in cold blood. The apostles were told to flee if the enemy was trying to kill them. Paul was let down in a basket from a window and escaped. Even Jesus knocked the soldiers down on the ground to defend his disciples. He even told the soldiers to let his disciples go. **Christ never got rid of the teaching of self defense against an enemy that would kill you or your loved ones.** If a murderer broke into your house and was going to kill your family, would you not do everything to protect

your family? Yes, first you would try to talk him down, but if you couldn't you would physically try to stop him. If you had to kill him to protect your family, was that not more in loving your family than to step back and let the murderer kill all of you so you could say you were "loving your enemy?"

**If the two commands collide to love your neighbor or love your enemy, when the enemy would kill your neighbor, you must then love your neighbor by protecting him against his enemy.** Otherwise you are supporting and helping your enemy to commit murder to your neighbor and actually hating your neighbor by letting him be killed. If you were about to be killed by an enemy, would you want someone to try to save you or just stand there and love your enemy and allow them to kill you?

**How does this affect a Christian serving as a soldier? Let every Christian be led by the Holy Spirit as whether to be a soldier.** Some by conscience cannot kill even in war. I was one of those. I had been called to preach the gospel. So be it. But others are free and even called to kill to defend their country. **To fight in a just war, when we are first attacked by an enemy that would slaughter American men, women and children in cold blood for no reason but hate and dominion, is not against Christ's teaching.** You fight and kill in self defense. You are part of the sword of the State. What you do is just and right. You fight because you love your neighbor, your family and country. To not fight and let the woman and children of a country be slaughtered would be to hate your neighbor, your family and country.

**The personal command of Jesus given to his disciples to love your enemies was to his followers to be obeyed on a personal level, as when you are personally abused by a personal enemy.** It is to teach forgiveness and showing goodness to enemies who personally wrong us, so we do not live by the code of "eye for eye" or a code of revenge. But this command is not for the State about enemies of the State who would destroy a country. If a State would not stop an attacking enemy, but just let the enemy kill multitudes of women and children, the State would become an accomplice to wholesale murder, neglecting its duty to protect its citizens.

**Neither does the command to love your enemy negate the command of self defense, either of one's self or family or neighbor.** Christ did not teach we are to let our enemies freely kill us or our loved ones. The church prayed for Peter and an angel delivered him. Jesus told the disciple to take a sword with them just before his passion. Jesus knocked the soldiers down to protect his disciples. Jesus drove the money changers out to protect his Father's house and the true worshippers. To use physical force to protect oneself or family or neighbors is quite within the doctrine of protecting and loving our neighbor as taught in Scripture. If a life is taken to defend an innocent person, it is well within the doctrine of loving your neighbor as yourself.

Remember, the two greatest commands are to “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength” and to “love thy neighbor as yourself.” Jesus does not place loving your enemies as high as these. For if you cannot truly love your neighbor or brother who loves you by defending him with your life if need be, then how in the world could you ever love your enemy who hates you? Jesus said to not resist evil when done to oneself, but was constantly fighting for justice, healing, and life for his neighbor.

Sincerely in Christ,

Pastor Stephen Brown