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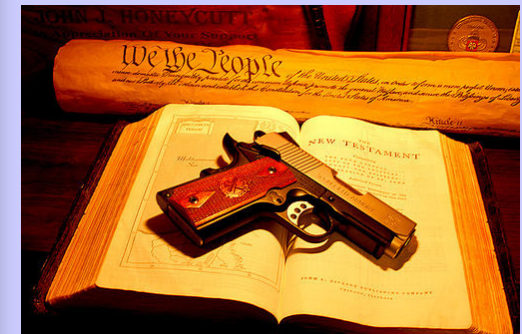


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▶ Should Christians Arm Themselves?



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Should Christians Arm Themselves?

I recently visited with a pastor who has a Concealed Carry License and is committed to carrying his firearm "24/7/365." Asked, "Do you have your firearm on you now?" He smiled, pulled up his shirttail, showed me his compact pistol carefully concealed in the waistband of his pants. Pleased that I didn't know he was carrying, He



bemoaned the fact that this is a divisive issue among Christians and that he felt constrained to keep silent about his passion for protecting those God has placed under his care. He, like so many other CCL

holders, continuously prays that no one will ever have reason to know that his firearm is always at the ready.

But his commitment raises the more important question, "Should Christians arm themselves, and if so, when should they be willing to use those arms?"

What Does the Bible Say?

Are there any clear directives? Or are we left with only a debatable "spirit" of the issue?

Old Testament support of the extensive use of swords, bow and arrows, spears, slings, tent pegs, etc. as means of godly men and women accomplishing godly ends against evil is clear, unequivocal, and inarguable among those recognizing the Bible as an infallible guide to faith and conduct. But is the New Testament equally clear?

Jesus himself directs his disciples, "And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one" (Lk 22:36b). This directive comes between the final Passover meal with his disciples and His arrest on the Mount of Olives. It is interesting to note, that having spent three years with him, two of his disciples were already "carrying." Moments later, Jesus stopped His disciples from defending Him with the swords He had just instructed them to carry. The

instruction to carry weapons and the opposite instruction not to use the weapons came within hours of each other.

Some, seeking to follow the second instruction and ignore the first, say, "when Jesus disarmed Peter, He disarmed *all* Christians", Others, seeking to follow the first instruction and ignore the second, use weapons to "advance the kingdom of God." The question must be asked, "Is there a sensible way of understanding BOTH instructions and harmonizing them with each other and the rest of Scripture?"

I do not believe Jesus changed His mind within hours of giving a clear directive. These two directives are not necessarily contradictory. Jesus knew His coming death was unavoidable (Lk 22:37; Mk 8:31-33) even though his disciples were still confused about His mission. He clearly did not want His disciples interfering with His death and resurrection. Thus, He stopped His disciples from using their swords on His behalf. He did not need nor did he request their protection!

But, Jesus also knew that the disciples would be threatened by evil men after He was gone. God could miraculously intercede whenever an apostle or believer was threatened, but he had already taught the disciples about avoiding the "leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 16:6) who constantly and continuously anticipated God's performance of signs and miracles. Jesus apparently intended for His disciples to do with what they had whenever possible. It is consistent that He also expects His disciples to defend themselves as they look to their own sustenance as well (Luke 22:36). While Jesus had clearly taught them that God COULD take care of them, His parting directive was that they SHOULD look to their own safety and sustenance.



In summary, God doesn't need anyone defending *Him* (or even *His* teaching) from evil men, yet He intends for His disciples to defend *themselves* from evil men.

Some point to testimonies and argue, "But surely God could defend His disciples without having them carry firearms."


The command from Jesus that disciples arm themselves is part of the same command that disciples sustain themselves. Though many argue that Christians should disarm themselves, few argue that they should go without visible means of sustenance. God's protection is no more nor less miraculous than His sustenance.

Looking for miracles to deliver us from disobedience is basically the same challenge Satan issued to Jesus—that He abandon Himself into the hands of a miracle-working God (Matt 4:5-7). Jesus rebuked Satan for such a suggestion. There is a line between faithfully expecting God's miraculous intervention and presumptively placing ourselves in need of a miracle that puts "the Lord your God to the test."

While there are many additional arguments, the words of Jesus to unarmed but faithful disciples, "... buy one," are clear, unequivocal, and easily harmonized with the rest of Scripture.

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