



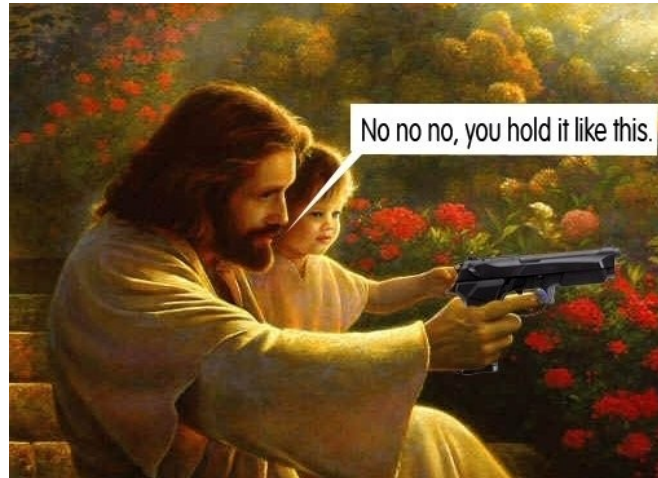
Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Parables Bookshelf - Series 2.19.1

Series 2 of the Parables Bookshelf contains a variety of writings covering a wide range of topics related to the Kingdom of God. These writings originally appeared as posts on the Heart4God website, or the Parables Blog, both of which are the websites of Bible teacher Joseph Herrin.

Gun Ownership and the Mind of Christ



The Great Gun Grab

Joseph Herrin (01-04-2013)

Some readers of this blog who advocate gun ownership by Christians for self-defense may find fault with the image above. It is intended to provoke them to consider whether the mindset they have adopted is harmonious with the life and teachings of Yahshua the Messiah. The Scriptures reveal that Christ not only preached

non-resistance to evil, but that He practiced it as well.

Matthew 26:50-54
Then they came and laid hands on Yahshua and seized Him. And behold, one of those who were with Yahshua reached and drew

out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Yahshua said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

I entreat the sincere disciple of Christ to ponder carefully what Yahshua was intending when He stated "all those who take up the sword shall perish

Parables Newsletter

- Series 2.19.1
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by the sword.” Were not Christ and His disciples being threatened by an unruly mob? Were not evil men in positions of government authority conspiring wickedly against them? Yet, Christ did not justify armed resistance. He reproved Peter when he sought to defend Christ with carnal weapons.

The truth is, Christ had far greater weapons of defense at His disposal than His disciples imagined. On the night of the first Passover we are told that one angel slew all the firstborn of Egypt. Yahshua had more than twelve legions of angels at His beck and call. He could have unmade the world with a command. This same Messiah who could raise the dead with the spoken word could have just as easily sent every wicked adversary to the grave.

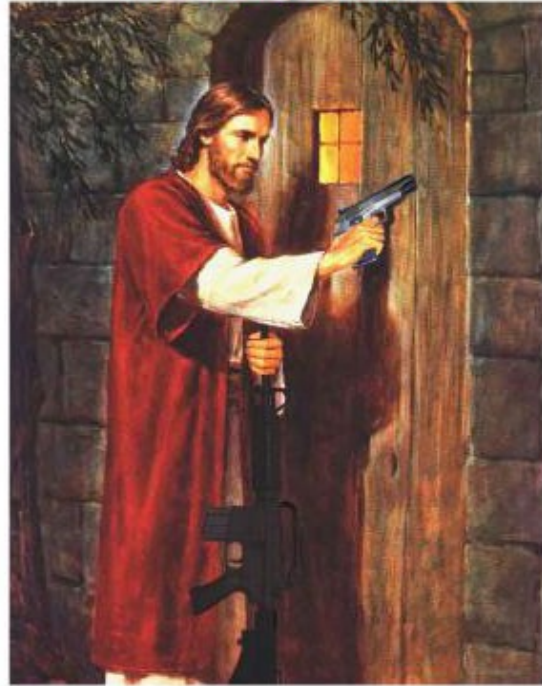
Why did Christ NOT defend Himself, or lash out against His wicked adversaries? Yahshua came to do His Father’s will, and it was His Father’s will that He suffer many things at the hands of evil men.

Isaiah 53:10

But Yahweh was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief...

The contradiction is seen clearly between Christian belief today and the life of the Messiah when an image is displayed showing Christ with a gun in His hand.

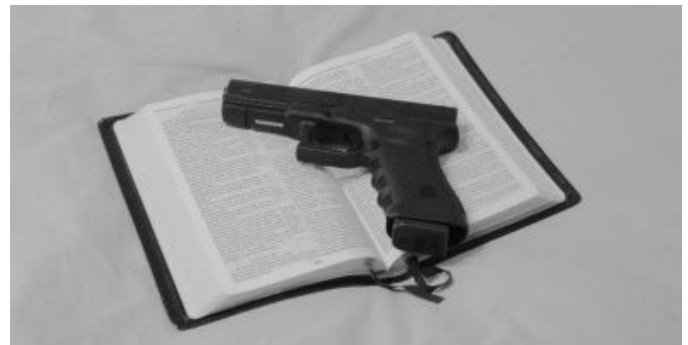
What is wrong with this picture?



The apostle Paul declared to the church of Corinth that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They are spiritual.

II Corinthians 10:3-4

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh...



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Carnal vs. Spiritual

The Messiah stated clearly what attitude should be adopted by those who desired to be found pleasing to the Father.

Matthew 5:38-45

“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 him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force 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 in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.”

One truth that many Christians resist is that we are not called to triumph over evil in the common sense. God has not promised His people that they will prevail over the wicked intents and schemes of fallen angels and wicked men.

Revelation 13:6-7

And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them...

Christians are not called to armed conflict with those in this world. The victory of the saints does not appear as victory in this world. The

greatest triumph of Christ came as He freely yielded His life on the cross. Outwardly, this appeared to be a great defeat. It seemed that wicked angels and evil men were triumphing over the righteous. In the eyes of Yahweh, however, a great victory was won. The saints in Christ are called to experience many similar things.

Romans 8:35-37

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

Don't rush over these words. Consider carefully what is being declared. It is appointed to those who follow in the steps of Christ to experience tribulation in this world. They will be subjected to distressing circumstances. They will be persecuted. They will have their food, clothing, and possessions taken from them. They will face many perilous circumstances. They will be attacked with the sword, or in more modern parlance, with guns and bullets. The saints will even be slaughtered.

BUT....

“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.”

How do we conquer? How do we prevail and come forth victorious? It is by manifesting the Spirit of Christ in the midst of our persecutions. When we love those who persecute us,

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when we pray for those who spitefully abuse us, when we bless those who curse and revile us, then we are overcoming the Adamic, vengeful, prideful, fear driven motives of the sinful nature. When we face our persecutors with the love, patience, meekness, forgiveness, and longsuffering of Christ we triumph.

Taking up a gun in self-defense is antithetical to the manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit. Our victory in the eyes of God is not achieved by killing or injuring others before they can kill or injure us. There is no spiritual triumph in shooting those who seek to break in and steal your goods.

Christians who have not embraced the disciples' cross, who shrink back from experiencing suffering and loss, often present hypothetical situations in defense of their position. One might ask, "You mean if a robber breaks into my house I am just to let him take my possessions, and my family's goods, and not resist him?" The answer Christ would give is "Yes! If you want to do what is pleasing to the Father."

Luke 6:30

Give to every man that asks of you; and of him that takes away your goods ask them not again.

Hebrews 10:34

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one.

In a material society in which Christians are inundated with a prosperity gospel that makes a virtue of covetousness, there are few believers who would accept joyfully the seizure of

their property. There are few who would "count it all joy" when they suffer loss because of their commitment to walk as Christ walked, and to do the will of the Father.

Some have written to me in the past and said, "If evil men broke into your home and threatened to rape your wife or daughter, or murder your children, would you not defend them?" Such hypothetical questions are predicated upon great unbelief. As a son of God I have chosen to entrust my life, and that of my family, to the care and protection of Yahweh. Is He not present every moment? Can Satan touch a child of God without first getting permission from the Father? Yahshua declared to Peter that Satan had sought permission to sift him. If Satan had not been granted permission, he could not touch one who belonged to Christ.

Similarly, we see Satan seeking permission to attack Job. God had constructed a hedge of protection around Job that Satan could not penetrate. Yahweh had to lower the hedge in order for Job to be tried. At the same time, Yahweh set definite limits upon what Satan could and could not do to Job. Do you not recognize that nothing can touch a child of God until Yahweh has determined that it is their appointed time to suffer? And when that time comes, we are promised that nothing we experience can separate us from the love of God.

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Yahshua our Lord.

A brother recently wrote to me and stated:

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The “What would Jesus do?” scenario is not valid in my opinion because He was only caught when it was His time. He easily escaped His detractors whenever He wanted. We don't possess such capability.

Such words and thinking dishonor the Father. We are told, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6), and “this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith” (I John 5:4). I will testify that God’s care for me as a son is no less than His care for Yahshua. He will certainly guide me, put a hedge about me, and protect me from evil. When it is my time to share in the sufferings of Christ I will receive great grace to endure all things.

Yahshua is our Pattern Man. Even as He was guided by the Spirit, so too are we to live a life yielded to the Spirit’s leading. There were times when the Spirit revealed to Christ that He should avoid certain areas where the Jews sought to harm Him, for it was not yet His time to suffer.

John 7:1

And after these things Yahshua was walking in Galilee; for He was unwilling to walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.

This was no carnal decision that Christ arrived at in His own soul. Yahshua only did what the Father revealed to Him to do. Those who walk by the Spirit as Christ did will receive the same guidance. Even as an angel appeared to Joseph, the husband of Mary, in a dream warning him to flee from the wrath of Herod, and years later told him when it was safe to return, and where to locate, so too will the Spirit guide all those who belong to Him. Not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from the Father’s no-

tice. Are you not worth more than many sparrows?

It is important for the saints to separate themselves from sin, and to live a surrendered life to the Spirit that they might hear clearly the voice of the Father. Yet, there have been many times when God in His mercy has spoken to disobedient and immature sons and daughters to deliver them from harm. I have heard many true testimonies from men and women who were saved from death, or some terrible consequence, even before they had been born again of the Spirit. Yahweh causes His sun to shine on the just and the unjust. If you want to be assured of hearing God’s voice, however, you need to be living a life of surrender and obedience before Him.

Christ never instructed His disciples to take up arms in defense of themselves. What He did tell them was to flee when they were persecuted.

Matthew 10:23

“But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next...”

There are numerous examples of the saints fleeing from persecution in the book of Acts. It is not necessary for a Christian to remain in harm’s way out of some misplaced belief that they must never act to avoid suffering. The will of Yahweh is that we be guided by His Spirit in all things. When He says to flee, we should flee. When He advises us to avoid some area, or people, then we should do as He directs. When He tells us to accept the suffering we see before us, then we need to accept what is coming. The apostle Paul manifested this attitude in his life, and he is a pattern for the saints as

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well.

Acts 20:22-24

"And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Yahshua..."

Brothers and sisters, it should be our focus to finish the course appointed to us, and to run a good race. We too must not count our lives as dear to us. They belong to the Lord who has purchased us with His blood. Those who attack the people of God are attacking Christ, for we are His. This is why Yahshua appeared to Paul as he was on his way to Damascus to persecute the saints and said, "Paul, why do you persecute ME?" Understanding that an attack against those born of the seed of Christ is an attack against Christ's person, can we not anticipate that He will act as our defender and protector? Can we not trust Yahshua to either deliver us from the wicked schemes of men, or to give us the grace, strength and peace to endure?

When a man or woman takes up arms for self-defense they remove themselves from a place of faith. Their trust is no longer in Yahweh's care and protection, but on the arm of the flesh. What a weak and pitiful substitute the flesh is! Any man who puts his trust in guns and bullets to protect himself, his family, or possessions, truly lacks understanding. There is no inner peace when a man takes up his own defense. The only peace comes from entrusting one's life to the care of God.

Psalm 91 is a familiar passage, and it has great relevance for the days before us. Many Christians have failed to understand what is being spoken in this Psalm. Pay close attention to the following words:

Psalms 91:1-4

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to Yahweh, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper, and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.

Are you dwelling in the shelter of the Most High, or is your trust in the guns in your closet? What is the source of your confidence? Is God truly your refuge and fortress? Are you trusting in Him to protect you from all those things named in this Psalm? Or have you placed your confidence in lesser things?

The promises of Psalm 91 are for those who make God their refuge; whose hearts trust in Him. Do you see His faithfulness as a shield about you, or is your heart filled with unbelief?



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Psalms 23:4

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

These words of David express the confidence that Yahweh desires His children to have in Him. Those who make the Lord their refuge will not be disappointed. The saints are truly sheep among wolves. We are admonished to be as wise as serpents, yet as harmless as doves.

At this hour a great amount of attention is being given to gun ownership rights of Americans. This will increase in the coming days. The government will not rest until they have prevailed in this matter and stripped away the ability of America's citizens to defend themselves. This may seem a terrible thing, but those who have placed the defense of their lives into the Father's hands will be just as secure as they ever were.

There are ministers who are advocating armed resistance, and who are asserting the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms. The following post serves as an example of the polemic that some ministers are spewing forth at this hour.

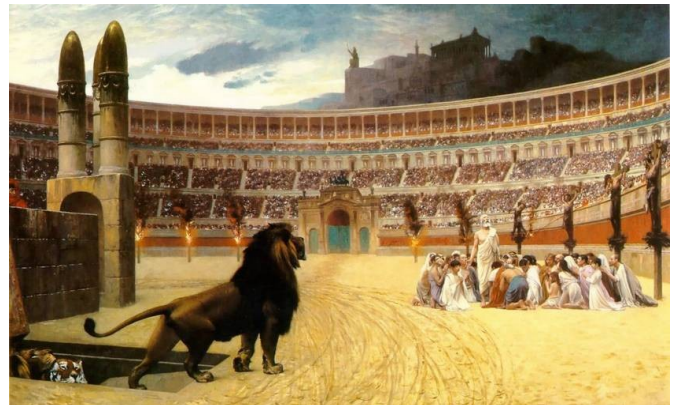
Brothers and sisters, those who take up the sword will die by the sword. We wrestle not against flesh and blood. Your greatest battle will be to overcome the fear, pride and other Adamic motives within your own soul that would drive you to take up arms.

Without question, there will be much that the people of God are called to suffer in the days ahead. These experiences are for the perfecting of the saints. To pass through these trials victo-

riously will require faith and patience. I am confident that Yahweh will extend great grace to all who put their trust in Him.

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Joseph Herrin (01-07-2013)



Christian Martyrs in the Roman Colosseum

Romans 8:36

"For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

I anticipated that yesterday's post on gun ownership among Christians would elicit some emotional response and opposition. A few who are in favor of gun ownership wrote to share their disapproval of what was posted. It is not my intent to revile any person. I believe that those who wrote to me were sincere. It is possible, however, to be completely sincere while failing to arrive at the mind of Christ. The apostle Paul spoke of this phenomenon among his people, the Jews.

Romans 10:2

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal

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for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

My desire as a minister called of God to teach the truths of the Kingdom is to lead others to truth. I do not seek to offend unnecessarily, for offense hinders people from patiently considering what is being presented. You will not find me name calling, or reviling those who have adopted other views. At the same time, I must press forward to speak that which I am persuaded to be the counsel of Yahweh.

As in all my writings, I encourage the saints to test all things. Open your Bible and examine carefully the Scriptures in their proper context. Invite the Spirit of Christ to lead you to truth, and to reveal any error that you might have embraced. I believe that those who love truth will be given truth.

One of the greatest obstacles standing in the way of the saints entrusting the Father with the protection of their lives, property, and loved ones, is a rejection of the message of Christian suffering. The natural man is quite naturally opposed to suffering. Christ revealed the great struggle between the human soul and the Spirit when He wrestled with the will of the Father while in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. Christ sweat drops of blood as His soul was crushed in order that the spirit within might prevail.

Matthew 26:37-39

He took Peter and Zebedee's two sons, James and John, and he became anguished and distressed. He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suf-

fering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

[New Living Translation]

What was the cause of Christ's struggle? He saw the suffering before Him, and His soul did not want to embrace it. His plea to the Father was, "If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me." What Christ experienced is common to all those who would follow in His steps. The apostle Peter declares:

I Peter 2:21-23

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also **suffered** for you, **leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps**, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept **entrusting** Himself to Him who judges righteously...

How did Christ meet the suffering appointed to Him? He **entrusted** His life to the Father. I have written on this subject numerous times, for this is a foundational matter for all who would walk as overcoming sons of God. It is appointed to the disciples of Christ to suffer many things. We cannot be driven by fear, carnal desires, or a motive of self-preservation. These are all passions and desires that reside in the flesh and soul of man, and they stand in opposition to the will of the Father.

Galatians 5:24-25

Now those who belong to Christ Yahshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

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When the natural man is threatened it wants to fight back. It seeks to defend itself. If a man comes up and slaps you on the face, and insults you, the natural response is to strike back both with word and physical force. This natural response extends to coming under threat of violence by sword or gun. The natural man would fight fire with fire, yet the way of Christ is to meet evil with good, and hatred with love.

Matthew 5:38-45

“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 him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also... 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.”

The Father told me years ago that I was called as a forerunner, to act as a pioneer and explorer for the saints of my generation. Even as Joseph went down to Egypt to suffer many years before his brothers, Yahweh called me to surrender my life and to embrace suffering. He has revealed that many others will be called to follow this same path, and endure many similar experiences. He has given me the charge of serving as a guide, to show His sons and daughters the way.

Back in 2004 my wife found the way of the cross to be very bitter. She became unwilling to drink from the same cup of suffering I was called to drink. She departed from me, divorcing me a year later. I remember well the day when a deputy arrived at the Macon Rescue Mission to serve me with an order to appear in court for divorce proceedings. It was Good Friday in the year 2005.

It was a bitter day for me. I went into the chapel at the Mission and wept. My wife and I had been married for 17 years. We had two living children together, and one who had died at birth. We had walked together through joyful times and sad, through times of blessing and times of trial.

The Spirit spoke to me that day and showed me the significance of my receiving this court order on Good Friday. This was the same date that the church commemorates Christ being brought before the Jewish and Roman courts. He was accused, sentenced, and delivered over to scourging and crucifixion. The Holy Spirit spoke clearly to me that day, enjoining me to adopt the attitude of Christ. I anticipated that my wife would hire a lawyer, and make various charges against me in order to arrive at a good financial settlement. The Spirit charged me to not do the same. It was the Father's will that I make no defense, hire no lawyer, and make no countercharges against my wife.

We read of Christ that when He stood before the Roman governor Pilate, that many charges were made against Him. Pilate understood that they were false charges, for the Jewish leaders were envious of Yahshua. Christ did not open His mouth to offer any defense so that Pilate marveled.

I understood the Father to be directing me to follow the same course. It was a path of vulnerability. I knew it was also a path of suffering, for Christ's lack of defense did not end in a favorable judgment. He was condemned, and handed over to punishment. I sensed in my Spirit that the only path of peace before me, the only way that would result in my conscience being clean before Yahweh, was to entrust my life fully to His care in the same way

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that His Son had done.

When the court date arrived my wife had a lawyer beside her, and she brought an old friend that she knew from the time before we were married to make accusations against me. This other woman did not know me. We had not had any fellowship with this family, nor did we spend time together in any other association. This woman spoke many false things about me, painting me in the blackest manner possible. Her hatred of me was evident.

Not having a lawyer myself, and not petitioning the court for any object in relation to the divorce proceeding, things did not go well for me. A large financial obligation was laid upon me. This was partly for child support of our son who was 16 at the time, and partly for an alimony award my wife desired. Combined, I was ordered to pay \$900 a month. At the time I was working as Resident Manager at the Macon Rescue Mission and was being paid \$100 a week, plus room and board.

Shortly after the court date the Mission Director asked me to take over a management job that needed to be filled immediately at their thrift store. It paid \$9.00 an hour. The Father made known to me that it was His will that I take the job. With the money it provided I was able to pay my wife the amount the court ordered until our son turned 18 and his child support ended. Even so, I was regularly sending her about 60% of my pay, and this was before taxes were taken out. I was left with very little to live on. The Father always made up what was lacking for my care. I was able to rent a room from the Mission in one of their Second Step homes for \$65 a week. It wasn't much to look at, and it was in a bad neighborhood, but it was convenient and affordable.

I knew that I could protest the financial award in court. Georgia had passed new legislation setting limits on how much a court could demand a person to pay, and I was paying far more than the law required. However, the Spirit told me to not seek any redress in the matter. I knew the Father did not want me to hire a lawyer, or to take up my own defense. Yahweh promised that He would take care of my needs as I followed Him, and He was faithful to do so. I lived a simple life. I had little money beyond what was needed to pay my bills, but I lacked for no necessary thing.

I continued in this situation until February of 2008 when the Father instructed me that it was time to leave the employment of the Mission and return to a full-time ministry of writing. I did not realize it at the time, but this was the same month that my son turned 18 and all child support obligations had been met. The court ordered alimony continued, however. When the child support ended, the alimony jumped from \$400 to \$800 a month.

For the first seven months after I returned to ministry, the Father's provision was sufficient for me to continue to send my wife \$800 each month. I always sought to send it as soon as I had the money in hand. I was careful to guard against any spirit of offense in my heart, refusing to wait until the last possible day to send the money. Yet, some months I was late due to meager provision coming in.

Eight months after I had left the Mission to return to full-time ministry I had a very short month financially. I was only able to send my wife \$400. I set my heart to pray to the Father about this. I told the Father that I did not wish for my wife to think I was unwilling to send her the money, nor for her to think I was offended with her. (We had no communication since

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2004 at her request.) Yet no further support came in, and the Father's instructions to me were to "rest" in the matter. He assured me the matter was in His hands.

The next month was even more meager, and I had nothing to send to my wife for alimony. She contacted a lawyer and filed charges against me in court for non-payment of alimony. I continued to pray and the Father continued to tell me to "rest" in the matter, to leave it in His hands. At the same time the Father made it very clear to me that I was to continue to fulfill the ministry of writing and teaching He had called me unto. The Spirit constrained me from returning to secular employment.

About six months later I was visited by another deputy, and given a summons to appear in court. I spent many hours in prayer over the course of some days. I knew I could be put in jail for non-payment of alimony. I wrestled with the will of God. I knew the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis. The Spirit had told me years earlier that I would experience many of the same things he experienced. Joseph had a woman request something of him he could not give to her without transgressing against the will of God. Potipher's wife wanted Joseph to have sexual relations with her, and this Joseph could not do. Now I was faced with a woman asking of me something that would require me to disobey God in order to fulfill her desire.

About two weeks before the court date, the Spirit told me that I would be going to jail. Even as Christ was shown what He would suffer before the time, so too was I. I was in anguish in my soul. I had never been in trouble with the law in my life. I have not even had a traffic ticket. To be cast into jail with murderers, rapists, thieves, drug traffickers and the like, was distressing to think about. I have

never been a physically powerful person. I was born with a bone disease that made my bones easy to fracture. I had broken nearly a dozen bones, and could not even participate in P.E. (Physical Education) in school due to my brittle bones.

I truly felt like a sheep being cast into the lion's den as the days drew nearer for me to go to court and be sent to jail. It is at such times when our soul is distressed that we have the greatest opportunities to make spiritual progress. The soul and spirit come into great conflict. They are contrary to one another. The victory comes as our soul is crushed that we might choose the Father's will over our own desires.

At that time, the Father spoke to me much about putting on a heart of forgiveness toward those who were inflicting suffering upon me. Like Christ on the cross who cried out, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," I was directed to put on the same heart of forgiveness. I wrote two posts in the days just prior to being sent to jail. They are some of the most weighty teachings on the Parables Blog. They are focused on the call of the saint to endure suffering patiently while putting on a heart of forgiveness. This is the victory that overcomes the world.

The judge ordered me to lay aside the ministry and return to secular employment. In great meekness and trembling, I told the judge I could not do so without disobeying God. He cited me for contempt of court and sent me to jail for sixty days. About a year later my wife again filed charges for the same thing and I was sent to jail for an additional 74 days.

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In both instances I took no lawyer. I mounted no defense. I made no charges against my wife. As a result, I suffered. Like a sheep to the slaughter, I was led meekly away to a prison cell. I spent four and a half months of my life surrounded by a very raucous environment of constant profanity, frequent violence, impure speech, and much wickedness. At the same time, I was given much grace. Yahweh sent me a few men with whom to share the truths of His kingdom. I was conducting Bible studies twice a day with some of these men. Even as Joseph was given opportunity to minister to the needs of others while he was in Pharaoh's prison, so too was I.

Upon being released the Father put it upon my heart to create a series of newsletters to send to men in prison who are spiritually famished. I have sent out thousands of newsletters in the past few years. I regularly have correspondence with men in prison. Some of the letters are heart rending. I can empathize with the things these men endure, for I have also been locked up in an evil environment and deprived of liberty.

People of God, I share these things to tell you that Yahweh has called me to be a vulnerability salesman. This is just the opposite of the security salesman who promises all the protection that the arm of the flesh can provide. Yahweh would have me to urge His sons and daughters to follow in the pattern of Christ who "while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."

Yes, following this path will result in suffering, but it is the suffering appointed for the perfecting of the sons of God. It will not result in loss, but rather in great gain.

Hebrews 2:10

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, ***to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.***

We too must be brought to maturity through suffering.

I Peter 4:12-13

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but ***to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.***

Brothers and sisters, I cannot say that there is NEVER an instance when Yahweh would instruct a son or daughter to use a firearm for the protection of self, or others. I have learned that when one starts drawing universal conclusions, allowing no exceptions, that it leads away from a Spirit led life. However, I can say with confidence that the prevailing pattern in the New Testament is for the saints to entrust their lives to God.

I Peter 4:19

Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

There is not a single example in the New Testament from the day of Pentecost forward where any apostle, or Christian took up arms to protect themselves or others against evil men.

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What we do find is a myriad of examples of the saints enduring persecution, confiscation of their goods, being driven from their homes, and suffering many physical assaults even unto death. “For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

I would admonish those sons and daughters of God who are in favor of gun ownership to consider the consequence of acquiring arms for their defense, or the defense of others. Will not doing so predispose you to resist suffering when God has called you to suffer? Will you not find it difficult to put on a heart of love, and of forgiveness toward your adversaries because your mind is set to inflict harm, or even death, on another? Will you be likely to turn the other cheek, when you have acquired a gun for defense? Will you yield your life to death should Yahweh determine it to be His will for you to glorify Him in this manner?

Hebrews 11:35-40

Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

This passage from Hebrews is the roll call of the champions, the elect of God. They did not win the praise and approval of God by beating back evil with carnal weapons. They won His approval by entrusting their lives to His care, no matter the outcome. Their faith held to the hope that Yahweh would provide for them a better resurrection as they accepted suffering, and even death, in this life.

Will you make yourself vulnerable in this life? Will you surrender your life fully into the hands of God for Him to do whatever He pleases? Will you accept that suffering that is the portion of all the sons of God, that you might be perfected through it?

Brothers and sisters, I have no carnal motive to take the guns out of your hands. I am desiring to place the crown of righteousness on your head. This is my heart. Entrusting my life to the care of Yahweh is what I have practiced in my own life, and what I have been led to proclaim to others.

For further reading about the practical challenges of trusting the Father for protection of one's life, family, and property, I recommend the chapter titled *Faith's First Steps* in the autobiographical writing *Evidence of Things Unseen*.

http://www.heart4god.ws/index_htm_files/Evidence%20of%20Things%20Unseen.pdf

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days.

P.S. Some have written to ask about the following verses.

Gun Ownership and the Mind of Christ

Luke 22:36-38

And He said to them, "But now, let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe 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." And they said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough."

Some of Yahshua's words are to be taken literally, some figuratively, and some to be understood spiritually as parables. At times there is some overlap as His words are understood at multiple levels. It is necessary in each instance to discern how Yahshua intended His words to be interpreted.

As an example of parabolic, spiritual speech, we have the example in John chapter 6 where Christ spoke to the multitudes and said, "Unless you drink My blood and eat My flesh you have no life in you. For My flesh is true meat, and My blood is true drink." Those in the crowd who heard these words were offended, for they took them literally. Christ declared, however, "the words I have spoken to you are spirit, and are life."

Another occasion is when Yahshua stood in front of Herod's Temple and the Jews demanded a sign of Him. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This was intentional misdirection. Christ knew that the Jewish leaders would associate the word "temple" with the massive temple that they were standing beside. Christ, however, was speaking of the temple of His body.

An example of figurative speech is observed when Christ said to His disciples, "I will make you fishers of men." This was a metaphor. They wouldn't literally fish for men, but the figure of speech was clearly understood.

An example of literal speech is observed when Christ said, "Even as Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of a whale, so the Son of Man must be three days and nights in the belly of the earth." There was some mixture of figurative language here, for the earth doesn't actually have a belly, but what He was saying about the time duration He was to spend in the earth was to be taken literally.

So, what are we to make of Christ's words in Luke 22:36-38? We see, that just like the crowds that heard Christ speak of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, the disciples in this instance took His words literally. One of the disciples responded, "See Lord, here are two swords." That Christ was NOT intending the disciples to actually act upon His words in a literal manner is revealed when He tells them that the two swords are enough. None of them actually went out and sold their robes to buy a sword.

Further supporting the fact that Christ did not intend the disciples to interpret these words literally, we find Him a short time later rebuking Peter for using a sword in physical defense by cutting off the ear of a slave named Malchus. Christ declares to Peter, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish

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by the sword.”

This very plain rebuke reveals that Christ did not intend for His disciples to interpret His words about purchasing swords literally. The disciples came to this understanding, albeit belatedly, as we observe that in the entirety of the New Testament following this encounter there is not a single account of the disciples of Christ procuring weapons, or wielding them in self-defense. Not one example.

Figuratively, Christ’s words could be understood to indicate that the experience of the disciples was about to change radically. He is giving them a contrast here. He begins by saying:

Luke 22:35-36

"When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" And they said, "No, nothing." And He said to them, "But now, let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one."

Here we see a transition being indicated. What the disciples formerly experienced was about to change. Was Christ saying that the disciples could no longer count on Yahweh to provide for them, so they needed to start fending for themselves by carrying a purse, extra shoes, and a sword? I do not believe so. Rather, Christ was indicating that whereas God had previously protected them all from suffering and harm, that would no longer be the case. Now the hand of every man would be against them.

Mark 13:9-13

"But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. And when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. And brother will deliver brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved."

What I believe Christ to be indicating by the passage in Luke 22 is that this time of transition was at hand. Certainly Christ did not desire for His disciples to enter into armed conflict with their persecutors. They were commanded to be “wise as serpents but ***harmless*** as doves.”

There is also a parabolic understanding of Christ’s words. What is signified by selling one’s robe to purchase a sword? Considering that the disciples only had one robe apiece, it would have been a fine sight for them all to be walking around unclothed, but with a sword strapped to their side. Yet there is a parable to be discerned in such an image. That a parable was intended is revealed in the oddity of this advice. Why tell them to sell their robe to purchase a sword? Why not sell their shoes, or catch some fish, or do something else to be able to purchase a

Gun Ownership and the Mind of Christ

sword? It is because of what the robe and the sword represent.

The robe signifies the reputation of a man in the eyes of others. The robe is the outer garment. In various places throughout the New Testament the robe is used symbolically to represent a man's spiritual reputation in the eyes of God. In Revelation John writes of seeing saints clothed in white robes, which symbolize righteousness. This is how God sees them. The Jews also judged men by their outward appearance, by the robe they were wearing, as Christ pointed out.

Mark 12:38-39

And in His teaching He was saying: **"Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes,** and like respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues, and places of **honor** at banquets..."

Outwardly these Scribes appeared beautiful, and all men held them in high esteem. They were like Jewish royalty, for they were entrusted with the Scriptures which were considered holy. Yet their inner condition was vile. The reputation bespoken by their robes was a lie.

When Christ tells His disciples to sell their robes, He is indicating that they are about to lose their reputation in the eyes of the Jewish people. They will be reviled. They will be cast out of the temples and synagogues. Outwardly they will appear vile, even as a man walking around without a robe would be a shameful thing.

The robe, or good reputation, of the disciples was to be exchanged for a sword. A sword represents division. It is symbolic of being in conflict with others, of peace being removed.

Matthew 10:34-36

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; **I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.** For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household."

See how the concept of peace is contrasted with the image of a sword? Christ was indicating to His disciples that their names were about to become mud. Their reputation would be stripped from them, and they would have conflict and be rejected by their own people. This is what is meant spiritually by selling their robes and purchasing a sword.

Being stripped of one's garment is actually a recurring theme throughout the Bible. We see its first occurrence in the first book of the Bible. Joseph was stripped of his garment twice. His brothers took the coat of many colors that his father had given to him, and later Potipher's wife stripped Joseph's garment from him. In both cases we see Joseph being stripped of his reputation, and being adorned with something more humble. He began as the favored son of a wealthy father, only to become a slave. This was a great change of reputation, hence the removal of his outer garment. Joseph rose to a position of some honor in Potipher's household, only to be falsely accused of trying to

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sexually assault his master's wife. He was cast into prison as a criminal. This was a further degradation of his reputation, hence his garment was taken away again.

This same pattern is seen in the life of Christ. He is the favored Son of His Father, but He lays His glory aside to take on a more humble reputation. He becomes a man. This was His first stripping. We read that his parents wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger. Here is the first lowering of Christ's reputation. At the end of His ministry He is accused of transgression falsely, even as Joseph was. The Roman soldiers take His outer garment and cast lots for it as He is crucified on a cross. This is His second stripping, and a further reduction in His reputation.

So we can understand that when Christ tells His disciples to sell their robes and purchase swords that He has a spiritual message in mind.

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