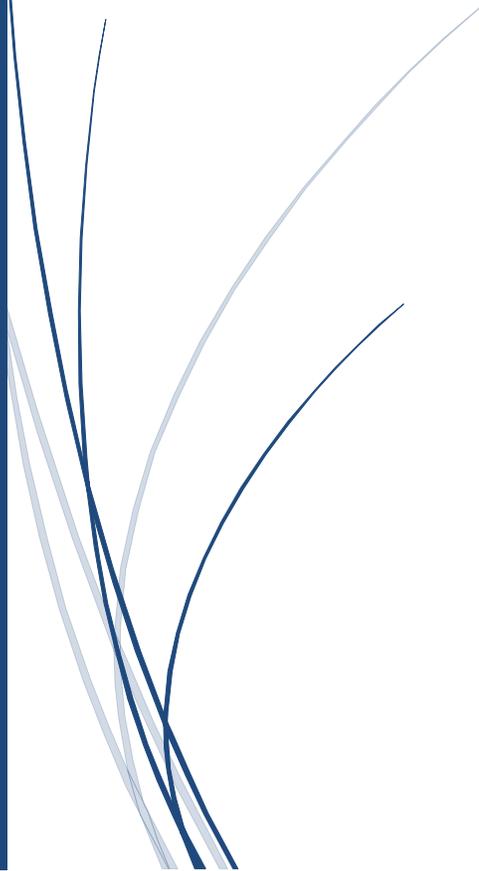


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Guns and God

A Case for the Second Amendment



Guns and God - A Case for the 2nd Amendment

Luke 22:36 (Sword included among possessions for self-sufficiency)
1 Timothy 5:8 (Provide for one's family, presumably protection also)
Matthew 12:31 (Axiomatic view of strength protecting home)
Luke 11:21 (Axiomatic view of armed protection of possessions)
Exodus 22:2-3 (Slaying nighttime intruder acceptable)
Proverbs 6:6-8 (Storing provisions)
1 Chronicles 21:5 (All families in Israel and Judah owned arms)
Matthew 26:52 (Do not use deadly force inappropriately)
Romans 14:1 (Do not condemn different beliefs/actions if righteous)

From these and other's I conclude, via axioms, example, law and directives, that weapons have a place in private hands for protection as one is required to provide for the well-being of one's dependents and one's self.

1. "If you don't have a sword, go buy one." Arm yourself prudently.

My reasoning usually begins with Luke 22:36 "[Christ] said to them, 'But now if you have a purse, take it, and, also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.'" Christ had been with the apostles for a few years. Being their leader and [nearly] constant companion, he had assumed the responsibility of protecting them from physical harm. He had shielded them from weather, mobs, and powerful & vengeful people. Now He was about to leave them, no longer providing immediate protection from physical assault. Along with other fundamental necessities of purses and bags (presumably with basic common contents), He tells them to, even at expense of comfort, sell a cloak and buy a sword if one is not owned. In a time when the local police would not be expected to show up within 30 minutes of a cell-phone call, when thugs were not uncommon, and when a group of murder-minded Pharisees were about to execute the head of a new religious movement (and perhaps not likely to stop there), Christ instructed them to prepare themselves to combat a violent, physical, and not specifically expected, assault.

One person I've conversed with on this subject suggested interpreting this a certain (and I feel contemptible) way in light of the next verse, Luke 22:37 "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment." The proposed interpretation is that in the statement "go buy [a sword]", Christ was specifically instructing his followers to violate local sword-control laws (presumably enacted for reasons very much like comparable modern

reasoning) so that His followers would be labeled "transgressors" and in turn He would fit the verse from Isaiah 53:12. I reject this interpretation, as it sets up Christ as one who would instruct His devoted followers to break laws - and arguably commit sin - solely so He would fit a known prophecy. Instead, I interpret this verse as Christ instructing his followers to rightly and reasonably prepare themselves for a possible and reasonably expected violent physical attack. While ten of the apostles eventually did succumb to violent ends, they did so at reasonable times, and not as the result of random or otherwise (how do I say this well) unimportant or unsanctioned violence.

This section in Luke ends with an important point. Luke 22:38 "The disciples said, 'See, Lord, here are two swords.' 'That is enough,' he replied." Many who oppose gun ownership fear a "wild west" scenario where everyone is armed to the teeth. Christ did not insist that every apostle possess and be highly trained in the latest weapons, bristling with broadswords at the side and other weapons attached to shiny armor. He recognized that this group would generally stay together, and that by reasonably arming a fraction of the group they could be reasonably protected against typical crimes of the day. Notice also that the apostles' response to Christ's directive was to show the weapons they had, with the arguable implication that said weapons were not visible or even known to those not possessing them, i.e. they were discretely concealed. They may not be able to hold off hordes of highwaymen or a Pharisee-directed army, but they, are able to satisfy basic self and group protection needs.

One may say "A Christian's faith is to be in the Lord, not his firearm." This is true. The faith of the apostles was strong, yet Christ directed them to obtain defensive tools. When we are told to have faith that God will provide, we do not immediately cease all labors and wait for a roof to appear over our heads and for food to appear upon our tables. We proceed to make reasonable preparations that God may work with and through those actions and items, be they food, clothing, shelter, transportation, or weapons. David would have been unable to slay Goliath had he not been armed with a small but effective weapon which God could work with and through.

How does this passage apply to us? In a family group, or in other groups acting together, a small fraction of the group should be reasonably and discretely armed, as that is likely enough to protect the group from extensive harm. In all the cases in our somewhat recent history where one person killed a number of others in a group (ex. Colon Ferguson on a train, the Empire State Building incident earlier that year, and even the Sandy Hook School incident a few years ago), I have always been sad that not a single person had the basic defensive tools, training and

reflexes to stop the assailant before the death and injury toll rose so high. One responsible, discretely armed citizen with basic training can stop an assailant bent on murdering dozens. As for the role of the police: they can only clean up the mess afterwards; it's up to the individuals and small groups to defend themselves.

2. "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." If a life is not threatened, do not in turn threaten life as some things are not worth fighting over.

In the passage (Matthew 5:38-42) where Christ instructs us "do not resist an evil person", an initial glance (especially by those predisposed toward gun control) seems to interpret this as a prohibition against opposing an assailant. Note that Christ's comments do not include opposing life-threatening assault. Limitations of English require us to dig into the Greek words used to identify life-threatening vs. non-life-threatening assaults. Tom Sullivan observed that the "slap" mentioned in Matthew 5:39, which is the only physical assault mentioned, is translated from the Greek word "rhapizo" meaning "slap", and the parallel Luke 6:29 passage uses "tupto" meaning "strike". A slap is hardly worth taking a life to prevent, as are many (most?) instances of a strike. Compare these to the words used for life-threatening assaults on Christ by the Roman soldiers: "paio" (John 18:10, Luke 22:64 and Matthew 26:68) meaning "beat", "sting" or "strike", and "dero" (Luke 22:63) meaning "strike", "scourge", "flay" or "beat". Another example is Acts 12:23 (God killed Herod) which uses "patasso", meaning "strike" with the given result of death. Noting that Christ used certain words and not others for the "turn the other cheek" passage indicates that He was referring to putting up with evil actions that did not threaten death or grave bodily harm to an innocent.

Reasonable and prudent possession, carry and use of a deadly weapon requires that one become wise in the way of identifying when deadly force be exercised and avoiding its use whenever possible. Many who oppose personal ownership of firearms for self-defense will make statements of the form "What's a guy with a gun going to do when someone wants to steal his wallet? Shoot him?" and "Oh great, now we'll have lots of people shooting others for getting annoyed while driving." These miss the point of defensive firearms ownership and presume gravely irresponsible actions by friends, family and colleagues. An early rule in defensive firearms training is that if a criminal does not seek to gravely harm or kill you or another innocent, give him what he wants. Whenever possible and prudent, run, avoid, deter, or satisfy a criminal that greater harm to anyone be avoided. My firearms instructor, a highly respected trainer, suggests carrying a small, weighted wad of cash apart from ones wallet specifically for tossing to a would-be

mugger that his evil desires may be satisfied and that additional violence be avoided. He even suggests doing so with a cheerful "have a round of drinks on me". Likewise, most hold-ups should be met with cooperation, as few thugs seek to do more harm than mere theft. These, and other actions advocated by this agnostic instructor, are wholly within the spirit of "turn the other cheek". When a human life is not on the line, do not behave in a way that does put a life on the line. Some do become irritated with this "turn the other cheek" approach, as evil seems rewarded. Be satisfied by scripture: Proverbs 25:21-22 "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you." Also, Ecclesiastes 11:1 "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again" - this goes for the evildoers as well as believers.

3. "You shall not murder." Never commit grave physical harm except to prevent grave physical harm to an innocent.

Opponents of weapons ownership for defense often bring up "Thou shalt not kill." Exodus 20:13 surely cannot be interpreted that as an absolute prohibition against taking a life as God proceeds to lay down numerous death-penalty rules and instructs the Israelites to go slaughter the inhabitants of several cities. Many believe, with various reasons including strict meanings of the original Hebrew, that the proper interpretation is "You shall not murder". Murder is a non-defensive act which stems from anger, and Christ extends this commandment to cover the angry heart. Also, a death stemming from gross or intentional negligence presumably is covered by this commandment.

The commandment prohibits the intentional, willful taking of another's life. When a life is taken, or threatened as an act of defense, the actor must perceive no other choice in the matter. The act should be such that it is followed by thoughts of "I didn't want to hurt him, but if I did not act my loved one would now be dead." Few could condemn a lethal action in such a situation, and those that do are despicable (more on this later). Exercising deadly force in self-defense is not done as an escalation of force, but as a means of redirecting the consequences of an existing threat. There are three criteria, as taught by the highest-level defensive trainers, for exercising deadly force:

"Ability" - An attacker must have the *ABILITY* to cause death or grave bodily harm to an innocent.

"Opportunity" - An attacker must have the *OPPORTUNITY* to cause death or grave bodily harm to an innocent.

"Jeopardy" - An attacker must be behaving in a way that places an innocent in *JEOPARDY* of death or grave bodily harm.

Only situations wherein all three of these criteria are met may a person actively wield deadly force against another. In such a situation, an innocent person is - by the intentional actions of another - about to suffer death or grave bodily harm, and an appropriate defensive action redirects the consequences of such an action from an innocent to the perpetrator. Put another way: an innocent person (you, your child, your spouse, etc.) is about to die and as an armed Christian you have the opportunity (and as discussed later, the duty) to change the "who" from the innocent to the guilty. In appropriate situations, killing or grave physical harm does not violate the sixth commandment as it is the only way to prevent an equal or greater harm. Nowhere in scripture is such an action - when appropriate - condemned, yet there are instances where a killing, to protect innocents, is described and not condemned.

4. "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Providing for one's family includes protection from violence.

1 Timothy 5:8 is a broad and harsh statement. Those who can must provide for their families. Surely what is provided is not just food and a roof, but (among other things), when one cannot rely on instant response from the local constabulary, includes means of protecting possessions by locks and protecting lives by strength and weapons. Matthew 12:31 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house." While this passage is in a different context (driving out demons) it relies on the presumption that strength in protecting one's home is good. A corollary is that a weak man cannot oppose those who want to rob the home. Likewise, Luke 11:21 "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe." Surely his family within are more worthy of armed protection than his possessions! It is unreasonable for one to protect one's possessions with locks and strength, yet neglect to protect those living within with appropriate tools and greater strength. And in recognition of a disparity of force (armed vs. unarmed, large vs. small, man vs. woman, many vs. few), various tools are needed to augment a person's abilities and increase his strength.

Exodus 22:2-3 "If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; but if it happens after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed." A break in during the day does not warrant executing deadly force against the intruder, presumably because there are others awake and around to apprehend or drive him off. But at night, when most are home, asleep and vulnerable, one can assume that an intruder entering an occupied home intends to, or is prepared to, kill the occupants. While killing an intruder must never be a

goal of the homeowner, using deadly force to deflect a home invasion is scripturally acceptable.

These and other verses indicate that armed protection of one's self, family, and even possessions is axiomatic within scripture. One can conclude that, because of the given laws and examples, the protection of self and family from violent assault is so fundamentally expected and required that little is explicitly said because it is so obvious. Like the framers of the Constitution, the authors of the Bible would likely be baffled at today's notion that citizens should disarm themselves in the face of well-known and common crime.

Given that protection of the family is a basic duty, and that preparation for any reasonable eventuality is repeatedly ordered (Proverbs 6:6-8 "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest."), basic preparations of training and tools for self-defense is a fundamental expectation of scripture.

1 Chronicles 21:5 gives weight to the pervasiveness of weapons ownership in ancient Israel: "And Joab gave the number of the census of all the people to David. And all Israel were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword; and Judah was 470,000 men who drew the sword." In the whole population of the divided kingdom, about 1.5 million men were registered sword owners. While the total population (men, women, young, old) is not known, compare that number to the current total population of over 5 million. Clearly every homeowner possessed a sword (the most advanced personal weapon of the day) and was ready to use it.

The role of the civil magistrate is sometimes raised in this discussion. As such serious matters of worship, justice, vengeance, law enforcement and war are handed over to the civil authorities, some argue that arms possession and use should likewise be handed over to authorities. This fails to take into account that every power of the corporate government is also present to a great degree within the family unit. Worship, justice, vengeance, law enforcement and defense all have implementations within the family. A family may not own a weapon of mass destruction, neither is it entitled to set up and operate a church; yet a family may own sidearms to repel assailants, and may construct a chapel for family worship if desired. In repelling an assault, an individual or family may only do so to the degree necessary to protect life until higher authorities may intervene. Also, when determining what degree of firearm ownership or use is permitted within society, those making the laws must observe the biblical and practical needs, and must truly be wise in the subject to prevent haphazard, poorly designed and ill-willed laws.

Some may still disapprove of obtaining arms at home and preparing for their use yet say "well of course I'll fight for my family when necessary". They do not realize that an assault requiring life-and-death decisions and actions will appear and be over in a matter of seconds. There will be no time for the police to come; they will show up in time to clean up the mess. There may not be time to even call the police. There will be no time to go get the hunting rifle out of the closet, find some ammo, load it, and threaten the attacker. There will be no time to figure out the best options. There will be no time to consider the morality of various options. There will be no time to decide what one's personal capabilities are. There will only be time to act on one's preparations. Famines may come. Fire may come. Bad weather may come. Debts may come. Criminals may come. Be prudently ready for all.

5. "All who draw [live by] the sword will die by the sword." Be careful how you use your weapon.

A quickly-raised opposition verse is Matthew 26:52 "'Put your sword back in its place,' Jesus said to him, 'for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.'" With varying translations, this is usually quoted as "he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword." This common quotation is quite true, as one who makes his living (i.e. obtaining food, clothing, shelter, along with protection) by a weapon is not likely to live long. Yet there is more to this verse.

The context of this verse is Christ's arrest, particularly when an unspecified believer chops off the ear of a servant of the high priest. A great number of heavily armed men have come to arrest Christ. In the face of ridiculous odds, and while still under the presence and protection of Jesus, one follower strikes out violently at the mob. The act is absurd, for surely if Christ had not chastised him and healed the injury on the spot this follower, and possibly others, would have been immediately slaughtered. Clearly there are times when one's weapon has no chance at protecting life, and acquiescence is more likely to lead to survival. As any firearms instructor will insist, never draw on a drawn gun, and that goes multiple if there are multiple equivalent weapons drawn against you. Another principle of armed self-defense is that if you do actively engage an assailant with a weapon, you will immediately become a prime target. This is why, when it is necessary to defend a life with deadly force, one must have a superior combination of skill, tactics, cover, and firepower, and even that does not guarantee survival. Remember, deadly force is to be used only when, without it, an innocent will die.

Christ makes this statement within the hearing of a highly armed Pharisee-led mob. In His habit of making points to the Pharisees with powerful indirect statements, Christ may actually be condemning the leaders of this mob by pointing out that those who draw and live by swords outside of mere immediate self-defense will come to violent ends. His follower was merely attempting to protect himself and Christ against armed assailants; it is the arresting mob which was truly drawing and living by the sword.

Notice that Christ began with "Put your sword back in its place". Where is its place? In the scabbard at the side of its owner. Even in the face of overwhelming force, Christ did not tell the follower to drop the weapon, but to put it back where it came from and where it would be ready for use if appropriate. It is hard to believe that Christ was condemning responsible weapon ownership and use, especially as this statement comes shortly after he tells his followers to sell their cloaks and buy swords. It is more reasonably a condemnation of the Pharisees for wielding swords in immoral ways, and a prediction that said persons would as a direct result come to violent ends.

6. "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters." If you don't want a gun, don't get one; if you do, be morally responsible.

Tom Sullivan makes a clear point: "Those who do not wish to have or use a gun are not required to do so. But those to whom guns are foreign should not try to infringe on the rights of those of us who do wish to own guns and use them." When pressed hard enough and long enough, most people will admit that sometimes it is reasonable for a citizen to own a firearm for protection. Many of strongest anti-gun leaders and lobbyists in fact own firearms or have well-armed bodyguards. Either way, there is the fact that coherent and educated people differ severely on an issue. Romans 14 goes into detail about tolerance and attitude in disputable matters. Romans 14:1 "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters." Romans 14:2-3 "One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him." In this case, we could easily substitute "carry firearms" with "eat everything", etc. and the point would remain. Some of us think firearms are evil and only good for destruction, while others of us think there is a moral place for wielding that destructive power. Let us learn to respect each other, and as in Romans 14:6b "He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God." Those who will not own weapons are

thankful for a weapons-free home and trust God for protection; those who do seek to own and use them responsibly see a need for such tools, thank God for the freedom to own them, and trust God for guidance and wisdom when their use is warranted.

Romans 14:21 "It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall." Excessive display or talk of weapons ownership may cause some to stumble or sin by entertaining fear and anger. Likewise, those who believe in being unarmed should not rail openly and forcefully against gun ownership, as it may lead those who differ to embarrassment and anger. Those of us who do possess weapons should do so discretely. Open carry of handguns is scripturally improper, as it attracts the attention and ire of those who do not approve. Likewise, arguably unwarranted prohibition against weapon possession is also improper, as it can place those discretely carrying weapons in the awkward position of having to choose between following rules, and risky impromptu storage of firearms and feeling vulnerable.



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