

Article 16 War and Peace

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I'm honored to share with you as a fellow clergy. I'm also honored to share with you as a 22-year Air Force veteran, and all the other veterans, thank you for your service, clergy.

I'm also honored to share with you as an individual that I had the privilege to share in four different conflicts slash wars, Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, the Bosnian conflict, as well as Afghanistan.

There's something that we all know that's a reality that can kind of push us back in our seats, and that is in the past there has been wars. In the present, there are wars going on, and if things hold to what has been in the future, we will continue to have wars.

With that being said, the Bible that we read and hold to so tightly, its prominent position is all about peace and oneness, cooperation, and love.

It even goes on to say, as believers, *we have the ministry of reconciliation.*

I think it goes a little bit further, and it says, *love your enemies, even pray for them that despitefully use you.*

It goes further, and it says to even *turn the other cheek, and all of us at least have four of those.* This Bible really does push us in a way.

The same Bible, though, it speaks to some things that we all know that are true, that the children of Israel with their leader Joshua, when they went into the promised land, it was not unoccupied. There were individuals there. There were combatants. There were noncombatants. There were civilians. They were in place. There was a war to be had and so, there is a tension even in the Bible that we hold so near and dear.

With that tension, years ago, centuries ago, theologians, sociologists, philosophers, educators, they came together, and they tried to enumerate and reenumerate over ways to justify when we should go into a conflict, and it came out being called the, "just war theory."

That just war theory became a litmus test, became a flow chart to help us to know, should we go to war?

Well, with that being said, we think about just war theory. Many of you are young enough and old enough to know about 9-11. You remember the Twin Towers. You remember the Pentagon. You remember an aircraft that was carrying passengers that was hijacked. You remember what you felt. You remember what you saw. You remember what you heard. You remember all the losses.

And not long after 9-11, our president, President Bush came, and he addressed Congress, and he addressed the American people, and he said, I quote, “and speaking to all of us and speaking directly to the terrorists, he says, they have stirred up the might of the Americans, and we will get them back no matter what, end quote.”

He even said, “we're going to smoke them out,” went to that point.

Most of us would feel in that very moment it was a just war to engage, and that is when the United States engaged in the war on terror. Not an easy thing to do, but a necessary evil to deal with.

Well, then we get to our Article 16, peace and war. What were they trying to put together with the Baptist faith and message in 2000?

When we looked at peace and war, I would posit that what we're actually looking at is a word that can help all of us, which is to be in harmony.

There will be wars, there will be peace, but this harmony, and for us to have harmony, for us to be able to work through war and peace, we have to have harmony with God first and foremost. We have to have harmony within ourselves, and we have to have harmony with one another.

You'll notice if you read Article 16, it has 12 different passages that they use to quote from.

I just want to lift out one that they have, and it comes from **Hebrews, the 12th chapter, the 14th verse**. And so, when we talk about having this kind of relationship with God, this intimacy, this harmony with God, that is what will set us in a place to have harmony within ourself and have harmony with others.

Hebrews 12:14 says, *follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

It starts off, the first word says, "follow." Follow means to pursue, it means to lean in, it means to be aggressive in getting after it.

Many of you remember the movie that came out a long time ago, Smokey and the Bandit. Smokey and the Bandit was a movie where this sheriff was trying to catch the bandit.

And he would always say when he came up against someone while he's trying to catch the bandit, he said, "My name is Sheriff Buford T. Justice, and I'm in hot pursuit of the bandit."

And then he would make it very clear that nothing was going to keep him from catching the bandit. With that being said, the wheels were coming off, the doors were coming off, the hood was coming off, but he was still in pursuit of the said bandit.

We need to be in that type of pursuit for the peace of God.

Peace is having relationships that are connected with God and having the serenity of God with all men, with all people and holiness. And so this speaks of us having that harmony with self and having harmony with the public outside of self, without which no man shall see the Lord.

I want to close as that music is playing, with King Solomon, who had a few issues in his life, challenged with having harmony with what he was trying to accomplish and with the mission of God, 700 wives, 300 concubines.

He had some issues that he was going through, and in the book of Ecclesiastes, he said, let me write this about the vanity and emptiness of life. He says, *let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep his commandments.*

Fear God is what to do and keep his commandments is how to do it.

For this is the whole duty of man. That is why to do it.

Let's be in harmony with God because peace and war is always prevalent. God bless you. Amen.

