

Bible Devotions: Lock Stock & Barrel
Devotional Reading for Outdoorsmen
(Old Testament)

Deuteronomy 20:10-14

The Big Picture: A Little Bit About War

When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people who are found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you. Now if the city will not make peace with you, but war against you, then you shall besiege it. And when the Lord your God delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword. But the women, the little ones, the livestock, and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall plunder for yourself; and you shall eat the enemies' plunder which the Lord your God gives you.

War is unpleasant. I think everyone would agree. War is the last resort nations should ever turn to as they build or break relationships. Yet war is necessary at times, especially for the defense of the country, security of the homeland, preservation of the family, and guarding of the defenseless.

Like anything man puts his hands on, war can be used for evil purposes. Tyranny and oppression come to mind. But on a good day, war is a Biblical mandate, as seen in the Scripture here. War can only be condoned when peace is condemned. Still, when good nations go to war for right causes, it's ugly, violent, wanton, merciless... but just, nevertheless.

Although the resolve of God's marching orders is applicable today, let's not lose sight of the intent of God's instruction for Old Testament Israel. God was bringing His people into the Promised Land. Unrighteous and immoral people had already staked out claims. So Israel fought at God's command; Almighty God who promised to go with them, to fight for them, and to save them (Deuteronomy 20:4). The Lord even told them how to properly staff the war.

Who are those men who besiege? Who strike? Who spare? Who bring war? They are soldiers who have no homes, who have no investments, who have no spouse, and most of all, who have no fear (Deuteronomy 20:5-8). For Israel, they were the young men culled out of the twelve tribes by virtue of their fitness and fortitude. These were those God led into battle. These were those to whom God spoke, *"When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you"* (Deuteronomy 20:1). The ultimate resolve: peace.

It's a fair comparison to the men and women in military service today for the United States of America. Those who do have homes, investments, and families have made a patriotic choice to defer those things for the good of their country. Bravery and fearlessness define our soldiers, even when they themselves least expect it or admit it. Some have proven it to the end. As a fellow patriot, I say thank you.

I am not a military man. I have no military background. The closest I come is in being one of many American militiamen – a duty expected by my country, a Right prescribed by freedom. For now, my battlefield is that theatre between man's heart and God's throne. My Commander is Jesus and I just obey His great commission. I'm joined by others in this spiritual warfare but that's another story.

I cannot give you a more grim picture of the horribleness of earthly war and the honor due our warriors. I cannot strain any more words to cheer for the end of any war. Few can. The greatest war correspondent who ever lived and died on the battlefield, Ernie Pyle, painted the best picture of the distress of war and the hope we must have for its rarity:

On the day of final peace, the last stroke of what we call the "Big Picture" will be drawn. I haven't written anything about the "Big Picture," because I don't know anything about it. I only know what we see from our worm's-eye view, and our segment of the picture consists only of tired and dirty soldiers who are alive and don't want to die; of long darkened convoys in the middle of the night; of shocked silent men wandering back down the hill from battle; of chow lines and atabrine tablets and foxholes and burning tanks and Arabs holding up eggs and the rustle of high-flown shells; of jeeps and petrol dumps and smelly bedding rolls and C rations and cactus patches and blown

bridges and dead mules and hospital tents and shirt collars greasy-black from months of wearing; and of laughter too, and anger and wine and lovely flowers and constant cussing. All these it is composed of; and of graves and graves and graves.

That is our war, and we will carry it with us as we go on from one battleground to another until it is all over, leaving some of us behind on every beach, in every field. I don't know whether it was their good fortune or their misfortune to get out of it so early in the game; I guess it doesn't make any difference, once a man has gone. Medals and speeches and victories are nothing to them any more. They died and others lived and nobody knows why it is so. They died and thereby the rest of us can go on and on. When we leave here for the next shore, there is nothing we can do for the ones beneath the wooden crosses, except perhaps to pause and murmur, "Thanks, pal."

Pyle, Ernie. (1943). Here is your war. Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company.

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Bible Devotions: Hook Line & Sinker (study guide)

Deuteronomy 20:10-14 The Big Picture: A Little Bit About War

HOOK

1. What branch of military service have you served? Or, what branch would you choose?

2. Name a just cause for war and explain why you believe a nation should embrace it.

3. List and discuss three concerns you have about the world war on terror.

LINE

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What are signs of peace The United States should expect from non-Christian nations?

Discuss your Biblical worldview of war (how war is or isn't justified from a Biblical perspective).

SINKER

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts on this devotional. Reflect on your own experiences.

Key words: war peace patriotism
