

**Some Thoughts on Warfare**  
(Deuteronomy 20)

- I. Christians are called to spiritual warfare.
- A. There is a universal call to war against Satan. **EPH 6:10-11.**
  - B. There is a general warfare in contending for the faith. **JUDE 1:3.**
  - C. There is particular warfare of ministry to which only some are called. **1TI 1:18-20.**
- II. In **DEU 20**, Moses laid down some rules for Israel's wars. We may here glean some insights for our duty to our own Commander and Captain of our salvation. **ISA 55:4; HEB 2:10.**
- A. These instructions pertained to the secondary wars of Israel for which special provisions applied.
  - B. The destruction of the seven nations of Canaan was governed by particular rules: total destruction and all able-bodied men numbered for war were expected to marshal. **DEU 7:1-5 c/w NUM 1:3 c/w NUM 14:29.**
  - C. There are some parallels with general Christian warfare.
    - 1. The numbering for war was only of *able men*. **NUM 1:3.**
      - a. Gospel warfare begins with God's enabling: a birth from God. **JOH 8:43-47.**
      - b. The man who does not believe is unable to enlist. **ACT 8:36-37.**
      - c. The man who will not repent is unable to enlist. **ACT 2:38.**
    - 2. All believers are responsible to war against sin, especially the lusts which war in our members which must be shown no quarter. A good start would be *seven abominations*. **JAM 4:1; PRO 6:16-19; COL 3:5-9.**
    - 3. The warfare of witnessing and defending the truth should be part of our Christian experience but some latitude is granted with consideration of inexperience, limitations by other godly responsibilities, opportunity, etc. Prepare yourselves accordingly. **COL 4:6 c/w 1PE 3:15.**
    - 4. NOTE: Christian warfare is voluntary. Only those who willingly come to Christ are truly enlisted, and once enlisted, their own will determines their success, failure, blessing, or chastening. God enables His elect but does not work them robotically. He works IN us to will and do His good pleasure. **PHIL 2:12-13.**
    - 5. The warfare of the ministry is only to some. **EPH 4:11-12.**
  - D. The numbering of men for carnal war did not include the Levites. **NUM 1:46-54.**
    - 1. They had a warfare of their own: securing and preserving the purity of religion.
      - a. Consider the marginal rendering of **NUM 4:23** compared with "...war a good warfare" (**1TI 1:18**).
      - b. Christ's minister is charged, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (**2TI 2:4**).
    - 2. Do not underestimate the importance of God's spiritual warriors in your culture **2KI 13:14 c/w 2CH 15:3-6.**
    - 3. Note that the priest did not just pray for the soldiers; he preached to the soldiers. **DEU 20:2-4.**
- III. For these secondary wars, some exemptions from fighting were allowed: undedicated house (c/w **PSA 30:1**), unenjoyed vineyard (c/w **LEV 19:23**), unsolemnized marriage (c/w **DEU 24:5**), and faintheartedness.
- A. The first three God considered precious things for man's life. **DEU 28:30.**

- B. The provision for faintheartedness would seem to apply before one committed to go to battle but once there, valor was demanded. **vs. 3-4.**
1. Christians should be wary of faintheartedness. **HEB 12:3-5; REV 2:3.**
  2. Christ demands courage and endurance. **LUK 9:62; HEB 13:5.**
  3. Battles against sin are not without support. **1CO 10:13.**
  4. He is ever with us for overcoming. **MAT 28:20; ROM 8:31.**
  5. “Let not your heart be troubled...” (**JOH 14:1**).
  6. The minister of God must especially not flinch (**JER 1:8, 17; 48:10; 1CO 9:16**), for a faint example in leadership will enervate the troops. **GAL 2:11-13.**
- C. The other three respected personal reward for expended labor and patience which a man should be able to enjoy and concern for them might be a deterrence or distraction in battle.
- D. None of these were meant to be permanent exemptions but consider the kindness of God in permitting these exemptions in the case of opportunistic warfare. Mission strength would not have been impaired by their absence.
1. God told Gideon to exercise this principle in **JDG 7:3** and the whittling down of their numbers in that chapter did not undermine their mission. c/w **1SAM 14:6.**
  2. They had a command and previous promises. **LEV 26:8.**
  3. “Fear not, little flock...” (**LUK 12:32**).
  4. A faithful church with *little strength* had an open door no man could shut. **REV 3:8.**
  5. Biblical Christianity is not a numbers game. **2CO 10:12.**
- E. The weeding out of the fainthearted is particularly instructive. There is something very wrong about forcing “woke” or “social justice” ideals upon fighting forces whose primary purpose is efficient ability to destroy foreign enemies.
- F. We do well to distinguish between tenderness and cowardice.
1. The weak brother deserves consideration. **ROM 14:1-3.**
  2. The strong brother should seek to edify the weaker one. **ROM 15:1-2.**
  3. Building faith increases strength and courage. **HEB 11:34.**
- IV. When besieging a city, the forces were to not indiscriminately destroy trees. **vs. 19-20.**
- A. The trees for meat were to be spared since their lives were nourished by them.
  - B. How foolish it would be for a saint to engage in spiritual warfare when he has foolishly cut the very things he needs for strength: Scripture, prayer, preaching, counsel, godliness, etc.
  - C. Those who have believed the gospel are “...trees of righteousness...” (**ISA 61:1-3**) and their company needful. **PSA 119:63; EPH 4:15-16; HEB 10:25.**