

**CHRISTIAN
PHILOSOPHY OF
SELF DEFENSE**

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A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF SELF DEFENSE

SELF DEFENSE IS MORAL AND BIBLICAL

Some Christians question whether a believer should ever defend himself. Christ is often quoted as teaching that in a self-defense situation one should not resist: “But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matt. 5:39). Actually, though, that passage is not at all talking about self defense but revenge according to the Old Testament law.

As the great Baptist scholar of Greek A. T. Robertson, pointed out, “Jesus protested when smitten on the cheek (John 18:22). And Jesus denounced the Pharisees (Matt. 23) and fought the devil always.... One thing certainly is meant by Jesus and that is that personal revenge is taken out of our hands, and that applies to ‘lynch-law.’ Aggressive or offensive war by nations is also condemned, but not necessarily defensive war or defense against robbery and murder. Professional pacifism may be mere cowardice.” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*)

The Quakers traditionally have taught pacifism, but common sense and a sense of moral responsibility caused many to fight in the American Civil War to end the evil of slavery. One is reminded of the Quaker who, upon finding an intruder in his house said, “Friend, I would do thee no harm, but thou art standing where I would shoot!”

I will admit one situation in which pacifism is required; that is when one is persecuted for Christ's sake. Such persecution should be endured with joy and not resisted. According to Christ, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you: (Matt. 5:10-12).

However the truth is that at one point Christ taught that it would have been perfectly proper to fight physically for His kingdom had it been an earthly kingdom. “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36). The logical deduction is that it is moral and right to defend your own kingdom-yourself and your family and friends-from predators.

There will come a day at the Second Coming when Christ's kingdom will be of this world. He will lead a massive army of the saints and angels to fight and defeat the Antichrist and his armies. At that time He will begin a literal, physical reign over the earth called the Millennium which will last for a thousand years.

It may even be argued that Christ Himself was using physical violence to defend His “Father's house” when he drove the money changers out of the Temple. His own words seem to indicate that to be true. Read the passage in Matthew 21: 12-13: “And Jesus went

into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.” In fact, according to John 2:15, “And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables.” I have seen a similar weapon used in kung fu.

The Apostle Paul, though he did not defend himself when being persecuted for the cause of Christ, did act in several cases to preserve his life in various ways. For example, there is the famous case in which Paul (then called Saul) escaped over the wall in a basket rather than stay to be persecuted by the angry Jews. (Acts 9:22-25)

He also delighted in using the metaphor of a boxer (perhaps the Greek pankration style) for the Christian life, such as in the following passages: “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air” (1 Cor. 9:26). “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6: 12). “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7).

One can go even further and state that Biblically speaking one is ethically required to defend not only one's own self but any who are weak and in danger. According to Proverbs 24: 11-12, “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?”

A BIBLICAL REASON FOR SELF DEFENSE

DEFENDING THE TEMPLE

Perhaps the most compelling reason to be found for a Christian to defend himself is that in doing so he is defending the temple of the Holy Spirit. As the Bible teaches: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” (1 Cor. 3:16-17; see also 1 Cor. 6:19, 2 Cor. 6:16)

Almost all Christians believe, on the basis of this passage, that it is wrong for a believer in Jesus Christ to defile his or her own body because it is God's temple. This is the usual argument Christians use against drugs (including alcohol and tobacco) and for exercise. Why, then, would it not also be wrong to passively allow that same temple to be violated by another? Surely few modern Christians would counsel allowing a Christian woman to passively allow herself to be raped when there is a possibility of escaping? Would it not follow that a Christian man ought to defend God's temple from injury by knives, guns, fists and feet? Why, then, would some believe that it is wrong to learn a martial art in order to effectively do so?

ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD

It must be emphasized here that all, including self defense, must be done to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31) This is a basic principal of the Christian life that is all too often ignored by Christian martial artists.

First of all, the Christian martial artist must give God the credit for his skills and accomplishments. David, one of the most awesome warriors of the entire Old Testament, always did so. In particular, his comment in Psalm 144: 1 is germane: “Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.” Again, according to the author of Hebrews, it was through faith that God's people “... quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Heb. 11 :34).

Therefore, the Christian martial artist should find every way possible to humbly give God the glory for his abilities and accomplishment. Though there may be no harm in receiving the rank of a “master instructor,” he should avoid every temptation to set himself up as a “master” in the sense of one who is a fit example to teach others how to live. His expertise in fighting qualifies him not at all to teach others how to live. Only Christ can do that.

I believe it is wrong in the eyes of God either to insist that the students call the teacher “master,” or teach that some particular art of fighting is a “way of life.” Jesus taught very plainly, “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:8-12).

There is, of course, nothing in the Bible which opposes having 10 ranks of black belt or having the title of master. However, there is a lust for honor in the human soul that makes it necessary to be very careful how we think of advanced rank. Those of advanced rank in a martial art ought to consider themselves as servants to those below them in rank rather than masters looking for servants to do their bidding.

This goal of humility and servanthood fits not at all the macho world of the typical martial artist. Though most American martial artists teach a form of “humility” (“All styles have their good points,” they say), few martial artists practice true humility in the Biblical way, even Christian martial artists. As James pointed out, “Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2). The Christian must be careful to crucify all lusts, including the desires to be admired and be called “Master”.

A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF SELF DEFENSE

The careful student will find that the Bible offers a complete philosophy by which one can successfully defend one's self in almost every situation. This philosophy can be delineated in three steps: threat avoidance, threat control and threat suppression.

I. Threat Avoidance

The Christian's first responsibility is to avoid fights. In fact, no truly wise person looks for a fight. According to Solomon, the wisest man (except for Christ) who ever lived, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Prov. 22:3, 27:12). Again, "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with" (Prov. 7: 14). Therefore a good part of self defense is simply determining where possible problems are and avoiding them.

Jesus Himself at one time before His death on the cross, which He willingly endured because it was for our salvation from sin and Hell, did His best to avoid trouble. He gave his disciples instructions to prepare for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem in a way that seems to indicate a secret operation. "And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us" (Mark 14:13). In fact, I read of Christians in a communist country who read this and were encouraged in their attempts to avoid persecution by means of secret signs, passwords, etc.

The early church in its underground activities used the sign of a fish as just such a secret sign. When a Christian saw the sign of a fish he knew there were other Christians nearby, perhaps in that particular house. The word "fish" in Greek was *ixthus*, which was an acronym for the first letters in the Greek phrase, "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." In this way the early Christians practiced threat avoidance to the glory of Jesus Christ.

WISDOM

The primary tool for threat avoidance is wisdom. According to Solomon, "But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" (Prov. 1:33). This wisdom is from God. Those who walk with God and learn his ways receive wisdom from Him and learn how to avoid evil people and the trouble they cause. (Prov. 2:6-15)

Basic wisdom would include locking doors and windows. A man in Tokyo was caught after committing at least 50 burglaries. His method was simple: in the dead of the night he would simply enter the homes of single women through unlocked windows or doors,

and rob and rape them. (Daily Yomiuri, 6/2/81) He was a vicious man, but these were foolish women!

A bigger fool, though, was the man who took his racetrack winnings in cash, \$88,000 worth, and then bragged of his luck. Sure enough, he was shot to death in his flashy sports car by a gunman, and the police spokesman said that it was clear robbery was the motive. Hmm, how did they know? (Japan Times, Los Angeles, AP, 6/5/91)

The old saying about “looking for trouble” is certainly true. “He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him” (Prov. 11:27). “Threat avoidance” really means simply avoiding the people and places where a situation calling for self defense might arise. “As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife” (Prov. 26:21).

Certain types of people and certain places lend themselves to violence and can be avoided. For example:

A) Alcoholic beverages are apt to produce belligerency, according to Solomon: “Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine” (Prov. 23:29-30). Such people “... eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence” (Prov. 4: 17). Therefore, to put it bluntly, by avoiding bars and drunks one can avoid many possible self-defense situations. The English version of a Japanese paper, The Daily Yomiuri of 1/25/82, tells of a drunken man who suddenly, for apparently no reason other than his, shouted “I don't like your face,” stabbed the son of the sake (rice wine) store owner, stabbed an innocent lady bystander there with her little girl, and then stabbed and killed the owner himself.

B) Proud people are also likely to be fighters: “Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom” (Prov. 13:10). “He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat” (Prov.28:25).

C) Again, the kind of person who scorns our beliefs can be avoided to prevent self defense situations. “Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease” (Prov. 22:10).

D) Also, it is useless to try conclusions with a fool, because “If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest” (Prov. 29:9). “A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes” (Prov. 18:6). Stay away from people without good sense, because fools get into fights!

E) It is also wise to avoid people who are known for not being able to control their temper. “An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression” (Prov. 29:22).

CONFIDENCE

The very process of learning a martial art can instill in one a certain self-confidence that the average bully will avoid. I had several fights as a young man before taking judo, karate and kung fu, but have not had a single one since my first martial art lesson. The very process of learning a martial art has the affect of giving one confidence in his or her ability to handle dangerous situations.

I do not mean what is now commonly called “self-esteem.” The usual usage of the term “self-esteem” ends up being what the Bible calls “self-love,” which is condemned by God. The Bible says, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers; disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy” (2 Tim. 3: 1-2).

However, there is a certain confidence that comes from long hours of practice resulting in hard-earned knowledge and skill. This confidence has a way of scaring off many who would attack. “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another” (Gal. 6:3-4).

SELF CONTROL

Another tool for threat avoidance is simple self control. For example, just keeping your mouth shut will keep you out of a lot of trouble! “He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction” (Prov. 13:3). Again, “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles” (Prov. 21 :23).

Also, controlling your temper helps avoid fights. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32). An angry man is much more likely to have conflict than a Christian who knows how to control his temper. “A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again” (Prov. 19:19).

Much of anger is due to personal pride. A man thinks his honor is impugned and he must fight to recover it, but Biblically speaking that is a lie. “It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling” (Prov. 20:3). However, prideful anger is the exact opposite of trust in God. “He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat” (Prov. 28:25).

Christians should certainly avoid things that provoke fights. “The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with” (Prov. 17: 14). We are told by Paul “... to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men” (Tit. 3:2).

We should develop a holy dislike of actual fighting, however much we enjoy the practice of our martial art as a sport and means of self defense. “He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction” (Prov. 17: 19). To quote Robert W. Smith, “There is almost no reason in the world to fight. But there is every reason in the world to know how to fight: it gives one Mark Twain's 'confidence of a Christian with four aces.’”, (Chinese Boxing Masters and Methods, p. 112)

SITUATION AWARENESS

How does one guard against the unexpected? Most problems can be avoided by the measures already mentioned, but there are times when the best efforts fail and one must be in a situation fraught with danger. You may have no choice but to be in a rough part of town, or in a situation where the characters you have to deal with would not fit in at all in Aunt Mabel's living room. In such a case remember to be alert. “The prudent man looketh well to his going” (Prov. 14:15b).

At such a time it is important to be aware of everything that is going on around you. In the old West, a savvy gunfighter entering a bar or restaurant would sit in a comer, or at least with his back to the wall, so that he could keep an eye out for enemies or danger. In our modern world, seeing a suspicious character before he makes his move may give you just enough time to duck into a store before a mugger hits you, gun the engine just before the car-jacker strikes, or maybe even just get up a hand to block before the knife fighter stabs you.

Keep your mind from wandering, keep your eyes moving in all four directions, use your peripheral vision and don't be afraid to stop every once in awhile for a complete assessment of your surroundings.

GOD'S PROTECTION

When all is said and done, it is the Lord who will keep us from trouble. “Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken” (Prov. 3:25-26). The Christian should trust in God to keep him from danger and trouble. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Prov. 18: 1 0). This is especially true when one has an enemy who has done him wrong. Rather than trying to right the wrong by himself, the wise Christian will leave justice up to God. “Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee” (Prov. 20:22).

However, there certainly are times in the life of a Christian when he must defend himself or others. My aunt was a professor at a Christian college. One evening she was accosted by a rapist in the very halls of one of the classroom buildings. For some reason known only to the Lord He had allowed her to be in a self-defense situation. She had to take immediate action-she ran, and thereby controlled the threat! By God's grace she was able to escape.

II. Threat Control

Many self-defense situations can be controlled without the use of violence. Someone has said, "Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent." I would amend that to say, "Violence is the last refuge of the competent." A wise man will not fight until he has exhausted the very real means each person has to avoid a fight.

FLEEING

The primary means of threat control is fleeing. That's right just leave the situation as quickly and safely as you can, like my aunt ran from the rapist. Jesus Himself did this on several occasions. For example, the Bible relates: "And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way" (Luke 4:28-30). He may have used a miracle to escape them, but the result was the same. He simply left when they tried to kill Him!

The truth is that the law in most states requires you to run until you are trapped before you fight. If you stand up to an attacker when you have room to run, it is possible to be charged with a misdemeanor or even sued if you injure him! Such a law may not seem moral or fair to us, but it is still the law. Remember the case of the "subway shooter," Bernhard Goetz, who got into big trouble by simply defending himself against some armed toughs on a New York subway with an illegal gun.

There is a false "macho" attitude taken by some that says it is unmanly to ever "run" from a fight. In 1988, G. Gordon Liddy (Nixon's "hatchet man," imprisoned for his involvement in the Watergate robbery) lost a fight with a pickup truck whose driver he had ordered off his property. When the truck came barreling at him he simply refused to move, saying, "I do not believe in taking back steps." According to the Reuter-Kyodo report (Japan Times, 1/1/88), "But the speeding mass of metal got the best of it, sending Liddy half a meter into the air.'The truck won,' he said." He suffered a broken left arm, broken rib, ruptured kidney and tom ligament for his actions.

There are times when you should not or cannot run, and the wise person will know when these are. A young relative of mine was up late one night and saw a car thief breaking into her family's car. While yelling for her family, she ran out to the car and tried to stop the thief by herself! Fortunately the thief did not stop to deal with her or I would have been short one young relative! She obviously should not have put herself in such a

dangerous situation. On the other hand, if the thief had entered her home, her father would have had a clear mandate to defend his family and even be willing to die in their defense!

Need anything be added to these accounts, except to say that avoiding trouble is not foolish? To quote some unknown philosopher, “The eagle may soar, but the weasel never gets sucked up into a jet engine!”

A SOFT ANSWER

Perhaps the easiest kind of threat to control is that posed by an angry man. If you act in time, the angry man is easy to control by the simple means of a soft answer. According to the well known verse, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (Prov. 15: 1). I have tested this verse many times and guarantee (as if my voice was needed to confirm God's Word!) that an angry man is easy to control with a soft answer.

One dark night I was chased, all unknowing, halfway around the interstate bypass south of St. Louis by a frustrated policeman. When he finally caught up with me he was angry and cautious. “I've been chasing you for about four miles,” he grunted with one hand on his gun. After calming him down with a soft answer, I was able to go my way with mercy instead of justice when he let me off with a warning instead of a ticket. God's way works!

I call this “verbal Judo.” The Japanese word “judo” literally means “gentle way.” It is called that because in the sport of Judo you use your opponent's strength and weight to throw him. The ideal Judo throw happens when you feel the direction your opponent is going and simply guide him on his way. I will always remember with fondness my friend Harvey, who came in full blast with an Osoto Gari (“major outer reap”) throw. I simply let him come, pivoting into Tai Otoshi (“body drop”), and he fell so hard the breath was knocked out of him. That, essentially, is what a soft answer does to anger!

GIVING IN

In the cases in which your attacker wants something it is easy to avoid a fight by the simple expedient of giving him what he wants: money, car, etc. If the attacker is armed, your life is certainly worth more than mere possessions. According to James, many conflicts come from the lust (desire) for possessions: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:1-2).

If you decide to resist a mugger, first of all count the cost. Is he armed? Are you able to win if you fight? According to Jesus, a wise fighter always considers the odds. “Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty

thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace” (Luke 14:31).

MISDIRECTION

Misdirection is that psychological technique by which you divert the attacker's attention from you, cause him to hesitate for just a moment, put fear into his heart that he himself will fail or be in danger, or even cause him to believe what he thinks he sees instead of what really is there.

Do not mistake misdirection for deliberate deceit. God Himself used misdirection in His battle plan given to Joshua at the second battle of Ai. Notice these verses from Joshua 8: “And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land: And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.” An ambush is a form of misdirection, and it was God who ordered it. If you study the rest of the passage (vv. 1-29) you find that the soldiers of Ai deceived themselves into thinking they had won, and every single one of them (v. 17) surged out of their city to destruction in spite of the fact that they knew that Israel had a much greater army.

In truth, what destroyed them was not God's stratagem so much as their own pride. That is the whole point of misdirection. The opponent deceives himself into foolhardiness or cowardice because of his own pride and arrogance. The person employing misdirection has not sinned by deceiving someone, but only “set up” his opponent for self deception.

A Biblical ethic will not allow me to lie, even to save my life. However, that does not mean that I must tell everything I know. In the old poser used as an excuse for dishonesty by the philosophy of situation ethics, it is assumed that when someone comes to the door to kill your friend, your only options are to tell them where he is or to tell a lie. There are at least two other options. Oppose evil with force. If evil is stronger, misdirect evil. For example, in answer to the question, “Where is your friend so I can kill him?” the statement, “Have you checked at the park?” would not be a lie, but might very well send the killer on his way!

I am not responsible for what some fool chooses to believe instead of the truth. According to Solomon, “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going” (Prov. 14:15). If an attacker deceives himself by misinterpreting what he sees or hears then that is his fault and not mine. The truth is, every time you use a fake or a feint in sparring you are using misdirection. Other possibilities in a self-defense situation include: faking fear or despair, pretending to see a policeman (the old “What's that behind you?” trick), pretending to have a partner or weapon, etc.

Monroe “Monk” Parker, now in Heaven, was a great evangelist and scholar who was director of my mission board for many years and had a wonderful influence on my life. A

very strong (lifted weights in his youth) and brave man, during a service he once lifted a pulpit from in front of him, set it aside and said to an intruder with a gun, “Go ahead and shoot!” His courage and strength unnerved the attacker, who gave up and left. In a revival meeting in a very rough town in Kentucky, he heard that an attempt was to be made to kill him. (An evangelist and his wife had both been killed by the same bullet the previous summer in a nearby town.) Dr. Parker defended himself by a beautiful use of misdirection.

Let him tell the story himself: “One night Pastor and Mrs. Wade and Harriette went to the church ahead of me. I came out of the house and stopped for a moment to pet the Wades' dog, Paul of Iowa. I rolled him over on his back and ran out of the gateway and slammed the gate after myself before the dog could get through. When I was running that short distance, I stuck my hand in my overcoat pocket and took hold of a roll of liberty-head dimes which I had in that pocket to keep them from falling out. As I ran through the gate, a man walked up and pulled a pistol out of a holster and said, ‘Hold on there.’”

“Before he could get the pistol leveled on me, I swung around with the roll of dimes in my coat and got the drop on the fellow. I said, 'Yeah! What do you want?' in a rather confident tone.”

“He stuck his pistol back in the scabbard and asked, 'Is Mr. Fleming at home?’”

“I said, 'You might go down there and see. He is probably at church.' He went down the hill toward Mr. Fleming's, and I went down the other side of the hill to the church.” (Through Sunshine and Shadows; Sword of the Lord Publishers, Murfreesboro, TN, 1987, p. 137-138)

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Christians have one more tremendously powerful means of threat control which the average Christian never considers nor uses. That is the awesome spiritual power of the Gospel.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1: 16). I am completely serious when I say that witnessing for Christ is an extremely powerful way to avoid a fight. If you have time to witness to the attacker, the Holy Spirit will begin to work in his heart to convict of sin-including the one he commits in attacking you! Being unfamiliar with such emotions, many will react as if you were pointing an M-16 assault rifle at their heart! I have heard and read of many cases when the Gospel was used in such a way.

According to a preacher I know who preached at a soul winning conference, a Christian attending had become excited about witnessing for the Lord. On the way home from one session he picked up a hitchhiker and began to witness to him. Lo and behold, the

hitchhiker trusted Jesus Christ as Savior, after which he handed over the .38 revolver with which he had intended to kill the Christian and steal his car!

Margaret Mayfield Palm, a young Christian lady, was taken hostage by a vicious criminal named Stephen Morin. Morin had just shot and killed Carrie Scott, who had tried to stop him from stealing her car (a big mistake!), and he was also being sought for the death of others. Morin, running from the police, had been trapped in a motel room by the police, but fled out the bathroom window. He then abducted Penn at a gunpoint to get her car. As UPI put it, "Palm testified that as they drove for eight to 10 hours, she told him about Christ and forgiveness and quoted the Bible. Before he boarded a bus, Morin gave Palm the bullets from his gun. He was arrested a short time later at an Austin, Texas, bus station." (Japan Times, 3/12/85)

A kind Christian grandmother was accosted in her home by an escapee from a nearby prison. Having taken the household shotgun, he threatened her with it. However, in her grand motherly way she sat him down for a good talk about God's love! He meekly remained seated while she called the police, who came to gather up the tamed crook.

If these stories seem incredible to you, it is only because you do not know the incredible power of the Gospel that Christ died for our sins and rose again the third day. Nor do you know the power of the Holy Spirit in bringing conviction and the power of the Word of God in taming the human heart. I strongly urge you to become a witness for Jesus Christ! There is a tremendous psychological impact in the Gospel.

However, it is entirely possible that in such a case the attacker will become further enraged by the spiritual and emotional impact of the Gospel. In that case, simply remember (even as you suffer) that the attack has become persecution for the cause of Christ, in which case Heavenly awards await you!

III. Threat Suppression

There may come a day when all of the above means of threat avoidance and control will be useless. Maybe the attack is too sudden, maybe the attacker too vicious or desperate, but whatever the reason you will have to fight for yourself or your family and loved ones or some weak person being attacked. Or, an intruder may enter your home and force you to suddenly have to fight for your life.

At that time you may morally use any method to stop the intruder. An Israelite under Jewish law was even allowed to kill the intruder. "If a thief be found breaking up (intruding), and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him" (Ex. 22:2).

Your first task is to be prepared for such a time. Training is important, knowledge of theory and technique is important and conditioning is important. In such a situation, one of God's servants reacted quickly and decisively to rescue his relative Lot: "And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. armed: And he

divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people” (Gen. 14:14-16).

Note that Abram's servants were trained. They knew how to fight and were ready to fight. Either Abram trained them himself or hired a professional to do so. Notice also that Abram's response was immediate and effective. He didn't play games, but took care of the attackers in a businesslike and effective way.

I love this story carried by the *Nashville Tennessean* (Chicago, AP) of 2/27/86: “An elderly woman pulled a handgun and fired at a group of men who were pelting her with rocks early yesterday, wounding one and chasing the others away, police said. Hattie Carter, 77, was walking her dog near her home about 2: 15 a. m. when the men started throwing large rocks and pieces of concrete at her, said police detective Patrick Sullivan. She drew a .38 caliber handgun and fired several times, striking a 23-year-old man in the arm, said Sullivan.” Granted, Hattie did not practice good threat avoidance by taking her dog walking at a more reasonable time, but she certainly was prepared for trouble when those miserable cowards attacked her!

I taught my “little” sister to defend herself from the time she was a little girl. When she was a college student she was accosted on the street by two young men who certainly didn't want to be friends. They began hassling and harassing her. As they began to get physical, my sister delivered a simple but powerful front kick to the “family jewels” (my old wrestling coach's term) of one of the men. The other man picked up his friend from the sidewalk and half dragged him away as he moaned, looking with fear at the gentle young lady!

There are many other cases where it is legal and right to physically defend yourself from an violent attacker. These include: a child being picked on by a bully, a woman being beaten by a man who she lives with (the Bible nowhere gives a husband a right to physically discipline his wife), an employee (store, bank, etc.) being attacked during a robbery, a police officer arresting a suspect, a common citizen being mugged in a public place, anyone whose home has been invaded by a burglar, a soldier in wartime, etc.

Situations in which it would be wrong or foolish to fight include: resisting persecution for the cause of Christ, revenge, action against a police officer in his official role (even if one thinks the arrest is wrongful), and interfering in a conflict between responsible adults which is not illegal. “He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears” (Prov. 26: 17). Of course, in this last case one should intervene if the fight is turning into a felony (i. e., one fighter has lost the ability to defend himself).

The Christian has every moral and legal right to suppress any attacker with whatever force necessary. The wise and prepared martial artist will do so. However, remember to only use necessary force. The law in most states and countries limits your options. You

cannot kill a man for simply punching you. I have in my files a newspaper article about a British 3rd degree black belt in karate who, while walking down a street in Tokyo, saw a woman being molested by a drunk. In defending her he kicked the man in the head with a roundhouse kick. The man died from the concussion sustained by his head hitting the concrete street, and the British gentleman went to prison.

In Erie, Pennsylvania, a topless dancer (a clear case of failure to exercise threat avoidance!) was attacked by a drunk in an alley. She kneed him in the groin (so far, perfectly legal), then kicked the downed drunk in the head over and over, breaking his jaw (it needed surgery) and messing up his face rather badly. In answer to the defense attorney's claim of self defense, the judge told the jury that "a claim of self-defense does not apply if an aggressor withdraws in good faith or has injuries that prevent him from attacking." (Chattanooga Free Press, 7/25/97, p. A2) She was convicted of aggravated assault and faces 10-20 years in prison.

The prepared martial artist may be like the man of whom the poet Eugene Field said, "He could whip his weight in wildcats." However, he will have proper control of his counter-attack. He will also not enjoy hurting his attacker, though he has to do so. "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth" (Prov. 24: 17). Self defense is a very serious matter of life and death, not just a sport to be enjoyed.

As we have seen, there is a very Biblical and responsible course of action for every conceivable self-defense situation. Let us walk with God so that we may be mature Christians, and know how to act and react in every such situation.