

**For Defense not Offense, Luke 22:36 cp.w Matthew 26:52, Summary: 1-12**

And by active, I mean anything of an aggressive nature that could be classified as force upon a fellow, law-abiding citizen.

**Murray, Charles. What It Means to Be a Libertarian: A Personal Interpretation. New York: Broadway Books, 1997, pp. 5-7:**

*In a free society individuals may not initiate the use of force against any other individual or group. The application of the right to keep and bear arms is strictly defensive and includes the following:*

- 1. It is for restraint against deadly force, not the imposition of such force against others.*
- 2. It is for the defense of freedom not the advance of totalitarianism.*
- 3. It is for the protection of ones' property, not the forceful seizure of another's property.*
- 4. It is for deterrence against the intrusions of the lawless, not a means of facilitating lawless intrusions.*

*If all obeyed the law, guns, for example, would never be fired in an actively aggressive way, that is, with the intent to warn, disable, or kill. Use of guns in a passive sense would have absolutely no consequence on the lives, freedoms, and safety of any person.*

*Passive uses of weapons would include possession, be it concealed or unconcealed; target shooting in secure areas; hunting in accordance with laws of conservation; and the hobby of gun collecting.*

*In no case may the citizen assume police power, that is, take upon himself the duty of prosecuting the violation of another's freedom, property, and life. Such enforcement is the rightful and exclusive prerogative of governmental police power.*

**Murray, Charles. What It Means to Be a Libertarian: A Personal Interpretation. New York: Broadway Books, 1997, pp. 7:**

*The first legitimate use of police power is to restrain people from injuring one another.*

*Criminal law forbids the basic offenses that involve initiation of the use of force. Civilized societies have condemned these for millennia: assault, murder, rape, and theft in their many variants.*

*A libertarian society would retain only a tiny fraction of the laws we now have, it would take the few remaining laws extremely seriously. For a libertarian society to function, it is essential that people be deprived of the use of force. In practical terms this means that the use of force is met by such certain and discouraging punishment that few people try to initiate the use of force, and almost all who try live to regret it.*

*If you cause harm to another person, you must pay for the damage you have done and "make whole" your victim.*

These principles line up perfectly with the Bible's establishment code. Further, the Scripture is clear that the citizen is never to challenge the legitimate police power of the government.

**Romans 13:1** - Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

**Romans 13:2** - Therefore, he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

**1 Peter 2:13** - Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,

**1 Peter 2:14** - or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

**Colossians 3:25** - He who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done and that without partiality.

The previous points contain background information necessary for us to address what I believe is erroneously called a “*problem passage*.” This problem passage occurs shortly after our Lord completes His Upper Room Discourse, a portion of which we have just studied. Here’s a chronological summary of events:

1. Luke 22:35, Luke 22:36, Luke 22:37, Luke 22:38 - The Lord issues new mandates regarding the approved wardrobe and accessories for apostolic travel.
2. Luke 22:39-Luke 22:46 - The trip from John Mark’s home to the Garden of Gethsemane where the Lord prayed.
3. Luke 22:47, Luke 22:48 - His betrayal in the Garden by Judas Iscariot where He was subsequently arrested by Roman and Jewish authorities.

The “*problem passage*” begins in Luke 22:49 and the details of the event in question are related by all four of the Gospels:

1. Matthew 26:51-56
2. Mark 14:47-50
3. Luke 22:49-53
4. John 18:10-12

The passage is considered problematic because of the fact the Lord forbids the use of a sword in His defense right after He instructed His disciples to arm themselves for that very purpose. The assumption of theologians, who tend to be pacifistic, is that the mandate to keep and bear arms is somehow misunderstood and thus invalid rather than give the passage in question an objective analysis.

First let’s take a look at the “*problem passage*” the most detailed presentation of which is found in Matthew.

**Matthew 26:51** - One of those who were with Jesus [**Peter**] reached and drew out his sword, and struck the servant [**Malchus; see John 18:10**] of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

**Matthew 26:52** - And Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.”

Here now is one commentator’s attempt to reconcile this passage with Luke 22:36:

Liefeld, Walter L. Luke. In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8, 1029-30. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984:

Luke 22:35-38 is difficult to interpret. The difficulties lie in the problem of Jesus' apparent support of using weapons, which is hard to reconcile with his word to Peter when the latter used the sword [in Matthew 26:52]. Also, the seeming reversal of the instruction Jesus gave the Twelve and the seventy on their missions [in Luke 9 and 10]. Thus, there is a question as to which principle regarding the use of force is normative for the church.

Since he told them not to buy more swords than they had [in Luke 22:38], and since two were hardly enough to defend the group, the swords may simply be a vivid symbol of impending crisis, not intended for actual use.

These passages are not difficult to interpret at all. Consider the following:

1. In Luke 22:36-38 it is clear that the apostles are under mandate to arm themselves.
2. The customary *rhabdos* is discarded for the more convenient and efficient *machaira*.
3. We learn from John 18:3 that those whom Judas brought with him to the Garden in his betrayal of Jesus were both Roman and Jewish authorities.

**John 18:3** - Judas then having received the Roman cohort [*speira*: 600 infantrymen commanded by a tribune] and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees [*huperetes*: bailiffs of the Sanhedrin], came with their lanterns, torches, and weapons.

4. According to John 18:10, one of the two apostles who already owned a *machaira* was Peter.

**John 18:10** - Simon Peter therefore having a *machaira*, drew it, and struck the high priest's [Caiaphas'] servant, and cut off his right ear; and the servant's name was Malchus.

5. Three principles are in view here which make Peter's efforts rebellious, unbiblical, and unlawful.
6. Peter is rebellious because he uses force against a man who is carrying out plenipotentiary duties assigned to him by a man who is in a legitimate position of authority over the legal and religious affairs of Judah.
7. He is unbiblical because the Lord's betrayal and execution are both prophesied by the Hebrew prophets, betrayal in Psalm 41:9 and execution in Isaiah 53.
8. Peter is unlawful because, as a private citizen, he uses a weapon, intended for personal protection, in an aggressive manner against a civil servant who may execute legitimate police power.
9. The Lord informs Peter that those who take up the sword in an offensive and aggressive manner will inevitably be destroyed by those who defend themselves as a result.
10. From this a very important principle emerges which may be applied to individuals, groups, and nations: Whenever weapons are employed with regard to differences among men, the divine advantage always sides with the victim.

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—Charles Murray

11. The Lord informed Peter that He possessed far better options should He desire to unleash them.

**Matthew 26:53** - Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

12. The Lord has a decisive advantage. In the first century, a Roman legion was made up of about 6,000 infantrymen plus 120 horse soldiers. The legion was made up of ten cohorts (of 600 men each), and each cohort included 6 centuries (of 100 men each). The legion was commanded by a Legate, a cohort by a Tribune, and a century by a Centurion.

Twelve legions would have amounted to 72,000 angels plus 1,440 horse angels. That's better than 11 apostles armed with two swords and one Roman cohort of 600 men.