

Born to Win

A Sad Week in America

by Daniel Botha

This week started off as a very exciting week for us with July the fourth on Monday, the 240th anniversary of America's rebellion against England—telling those English people that we don't need them and we're going to go it alone. So we celebrated our Independence Day, which is kind of a “happy holiday” in the United States almost similar to Thanksgiving. And we went and watched the parade in our little village, which we have every year. It was a little sparsely attended this year. I think it's because the weather looked like it was going to be a little bad, but it turned out to be quite nice. At least we didn't bake in the hot sun; it was about the only cool day we had this week.

And after that, we gathered around and we sang the national anthem, and they had a huge flag with 45 stars. (It belonged to somebody who was awarded that flag when there were only 45 states in the United States.) It's an old flag, a huge flag. They always have that there; it belongs to somebody attached to our village. And then they had six World War II veterans still alive in our village—and they looked quite sprightly, actually. And then there was another, very elderly man dressed like Abraham Lincoln—virtually a dead ringer for Abraham Lincoln, you know—it looked exactly like him, dressed in black and the beard. It was quite fun. All the children they participate in the little procession. Some fancy, old motor cars. Normally, we had the police there with their horses from the sheriff's department. But they weren't there this year, so I didn't know what happened to them. But that was Monday.

And then, in the evening, my wife and I (like maybe some of you) watched the concert and fireworks display from Washington D.C. over the television. I always enjoy that—terrific concert, terrific feeling—and, of course, last year we were *there* for that. And again, it rained in Washington—cloud cover came over—but it broke up and people could still enjoy the festivities and the music and the *uplifting* things that emanate from such a holiday. Of course, the week didn't *stay* that way. It turned into what I would call a very sad week in the United States of America, and maybe that's the title of my sermon: a sad week in the United States of America.

I don't know if I've ever actually watched somebody being shot at close range like I saw this week. The videos have gone viral on the internet. We've had it on our TVs any number of times, of two policemen holding down a man, and then the policeman pulling his revolver out of the holster and then literally shooting the man point-blank. I saw many things in Africa, but I never saw that. And, of course, I just said, “Oh no, not again.” And then, a little later (what was it, the next day?) we saw vividly on our TVs, as it was reproduced from Facebook, (which has become the face of the world—everything's on Facebook) this woman in the car that was pulled over because there was a faulty tail-light. And you cannot imagine that a faulty tail-light would lead to a man being shot in his car, while the woman is trying to explain to the policeman, “The man has a gun, but it is licensed.” There was a four-year-old child in the car watching all this, and the man who works (or used to work) in the cafeteria at a school and was friends with all the school-kids and everybody else—just a nice, friendly, young man—is now *dead*.

Of course we had the regular uproar around the country, especially in the two cities in which that occurred. And then, on Thursday evening, I went to bed early—earlier than normal—my life was already in bed, and I got ready to go to bed. And then I sat on the side of my bed which I normally do—

I always just take a couple of minutes to think and reflect and maybe talk to God a little bit more, took my pills (I have to take pills to keep going). And just as I was sitting there Thursday evening like that, I just had a horrible, horrible, horrible foreboding which caused me to say, “Oh, God, I hope not!” Because I thought, somewhere in the United States, somebody is going to kill a policeman.

What I didn’t know was, as I was sitting on my bed, somebody was already just waiting—down in Dallas; not a half an hour drive from our home—waiting for one of the protest marches to conclude so that he could then fire on the police. And when I looked at the video on that, and saw what happened there, I immediately knew this was a military man—the way he ran from pillar to post, shooting, ducking—I could see that he was a professional. I said to my wife, “That’s a military man.” Actually, I went to bed and fell asleep, woke up at 12 o’clock, put the bedside radio on, and that’s when I heard that there was a shooting going on in Dallas. So I headed downstairs immediately to put the TV on, and sat and watched the whole episode—the whole tragic episode.

It shakes one when you see this. We used to have this kind of thing down in South Africa, except not vividly displayed on TV: people killed—some people killed because of the color of their skin. Nobody can tell me that does not happen; I saw it happen in South Africa for *years*. I myself was one day pulled off the road by a policeman. I was driving a truck. (It was more like a kind of a motor-home.) And inside it, I had 11 non-white cricket players—the church cricket team—that I was taking up to Johannesburg. And the policeman saw I was coming and he pulled us off, walked around the thing desperately trying to find something that was wrong, and finally found some very small thing and said he had to write me a ticket. The ticket was the equivalent of about three dollars. But as we were walking toward his car he turned to me and he said, “You’re a white man!” And I said, “Yes.” That’s when he first realized that I was a white man, he was kind of taken aback. But it kind of gives you the sense—it’s sad, it’s very sad.

Now, some will tell me that, “Well, this is part of America.” We have some blessings in America—lots of them: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We have some rights in America: to worship, freedom of speech, freedom of the press—all kinds of freedoms that they don’t have in other countries—and we should appreciate it. And then some will quickly remind us that we also have the Second Amendment—the right to bear arms. When Mr. and Mrs. Obama first moved into the White House, there with considerable complaints about her dresses...until somebody pointed out that, according to the Second Amendment, you’re allowed to *bare arms*. [*Laughter*] (Because Mrs. Obama liked to have dresses that were sleeveless.)

So, now we’re back to the big discussion about guns and police and non-whites. And my question is, “What do I do as a Christian?” See, I’ve lived with this kind of thing all my life. Let’s go to Luke 22 and verse 34. This is Jesus, and he said to Peter:

Luke 22

AKJV

³⁴ [...] I tell you, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that you shall thrice deny that you know me.

This is just before Jesus’ arrest. He knew he was going to die. And then Jesus said an interesting thing, he said in verse 35:

Luke 22

AKJV

³⁵ [...] When I sent you without purse, and money, and shoes, lacked you any thing? [...]

He’s referring to the time he originally sent them out. You read about that in Matthew 10, where he said, “Don’t worry about what you will eat and. Everything will be provided for you.” He said, “Did

you lack anything?” No, because God would provide.

Luke 22

AKJV

³⁵ [...] And they said, Nothing.

³⁶ Then said he to them, But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise his money: and he that has no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

So, you have this interesting story here of Jesus telling his disciples to buy a sword. And I've heard people say, "Well, that means, you know, we should go out and buy a gun." Verse 37:

Luke 22

AKJV

³⁷ For I say to you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

Why did Jesus tell his disciples to go get a sword? Self-defense? Well, that's ridiculous, because Jesus knew that he could call on his Father and his Father would have sent millions of angels down to protect him. No, it's clear: Go, get a sword, because it was prophesied back in the Book of Isaiah that he would be accounted with the transgressors. "Yeah, look at him—he and his buddies—they have swords." What did Jesus say about this? You know, in fact the very first sermon I ever gave over here I asked the question, "What did Jesus say?" And we need to get back to that: What did Jesus say—what *does Jesus say*—about some of these things? Let's go to Matthew 26, later on that night. This is where they now came to arrest Jesus:

Matthew 26

KJV

⁴⁷ And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

⁴⁸ Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

So Judas identified Jesus, "That's the one", because Jesus would have looked just like any of the other disciples. He did not walk around with long hair and a halo and all that kind of stuff. No, he just looked like a rugged Jew, like all the others, so he had to be identified—which one was the one called Jesus.

Matthew 26

KJV

⁴⁹ And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

⁵⁰ And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

⁵¹ And, behold, one of them [...]

That was Peter; we can read in the Book of John.

Matthew 26

KJV

⁵¹ [...] One of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.

Peter pulled out his sword and cut this man's ear off. Of course, I always think, "How did he do that? How do you cut his ear off without cutting his shoulder blade?" Well, knowing Peter—looking at his personality and the way he did things—chances are Peter took that sword and went for the man's *head*, and maybe the person ducked and then as the sword went past it just got his ear. It's the only way I can see him getting somebody's ear off. Anyway, be that as it may, what did Jesus say? Verse 52:

Matthew 26

KJV

⁵² Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Now that's a verse I read and learned back in 1961. It's a long time ago, 1961. I was just a young man, and I was called into the army, and I refused to go. I became a conscientious objector. And they wanted me to explain why, and I explained this: that Jesus did not want his servants to fight. And then they said, "Well, what about all the people in the Old Testament that fought—King David and others in the Old Testament that fought?" Well, the answer was very simple: they weren't Christians. Some of them were God-fearing people, but they were living in a different dispensation. They were not *Christians*. They were not *following Jesus the Christ*, who came with a slightly different message—a *vastly different* message. How different? Jesus said:

Matthew 5

AKJV

⁴³ You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.

⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you[.]

And it saddens me that I learned that message back in 1961. When I got to Ambassador College in England in 1963, as a freshman, we were going through the Bible—the Bible 101, the bottom level, the first class that we had—"Principles of the Gospels" or something it was called. We were going through all the gospels, going through the harmony of the Gospels, and I learned there what Jesus said: "He that lives by the sword will die by the sword."

You see, it's one thing to say, "Yes, you've got a Second Amendment right." Yes, Americans have the Second Amendment right—you are allowed to bear arms. Anybody can go and buy themselves a gun. There are big arguments about what *kind* of guns people can buy. Well, we see this man ahead an automatic rifle. He had training. He was a military man. I found out later that he was making bombs or something—he had the equipment to make bombs—in Mesquite. That's half-an-hour from my house... not even, more like 15 from my house. This lone wolf, this one person living by himself with his mother, had spent time in Afghanistan. He was a trained man, and he was going to kill *white people and cops*. Because he has a Second Amendment right to have guns. But I don't want to talk about people out there, because they have their rights. Sure they have their rights. They could do lots of things which I wouldn't necessarily do. Some things are lawful but they're not convenient, the apostle Paul wrote [**1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:23**]. But let's look in here; let's look at the church; let's look at those of us who claim to be Christians.

From the first time I came to the United States until these recent years, I found Christians in the Churches of God openly talking in favor of carrying a gun. That's their right. There was one church, the first time we were there—they didn't know us, we were strangers—and the first thing somebody told me when I walked into that congregation was, "Oh, you don't have to worry when you come here. You're safe because some of us are armed." And I almost walked out of that church, never to go back. I went to another congregation, and a man got up and gave a sermon in series of sermons, apparently, he had been giving on the Ten Commandments. And we happened to be there when he covered the sixth

commandment. This is a man in the Church of God, a minister, who got out and spent *the whole sermon* going through the Old Testament and how the Old Testament gives you the *right* to kill. And I sat there thinking, “What about Jesus? What about Jesus? What about what Jesus *said*?” I met one friend there; we became good friends. One day, we were going over to the potluck—I put my arm around him and said, “Let’s go to the potluck.” When I put my arm around him, I realized he was packing.

What’s that? What’s happened to Christianity? What’s happened to the true teachings of the Bible? Some took exception to me, here one time, saying that I didn’t carry a gun in South Africa—and I visited in some of the most dangerous areas of South Africa. I still don’t carry a gun, and I’m not going to carry a gun because I don’t think it’s right for *me* to carry a gun. You want to carry a gun, go for it. The man who was sitting in the car, he had a Second Amendment right to have a gun in his pocket. He also had a license for that gun, and he was *shot in that car*. Jesus said, “He that lives by the gun, dies by the gun.” The man who was making bombs at home that he wanted to use sometime—he lost his life because they literally sent a bomb to blow up in his face and kill him. He that lives by the bomb, will die by the bomb. He that lives by the sword, will die by the sword.

Let’s go to Matthew 5. What did Jesus say? Are we going to go the way Jesus said we should go? Is that what we do—trust him to take care of us?. I could have been dead a half-a-dozen times, maybe more, in some of the areas that I visited. 11 o’clock at night in a shanty town and squatter camps and whatever else—a white man in Africa. God always preserved my life. One time we had a church picnic down in South Africa, when it got close to the big general election we had there. I got to the picnic and here’s some of our members, at the picnic, *armed to the teeth*.

How deep is our Christianity? I can tell you about people from the Scriptures who faced lions, faced swords, faced *all kinds of things*, and they trusted God to deliver them. The apostle Peter himself—they took him to Rome, they threw him in a dungeon that was a giant , kind of, a dug-out cave below who another dug-out area. The real bad prisoners they put in the bottom. The lesser of the prisoners they put in the top. The feces from the top prisoners used to fall down on the bottom prisoners. That’s where Peter was; that’s where he was imprisoned in Rome. And while he was there, I believe, it was 40 people were converted—from the man down there, covered in muck, because he trusted God.

Sometimes I ask myself, “Why do our churches not grow? Where has that simple faith in God gone?” Oh, we talk big things; we seem to know everything; we argue about this, that, and the other thing. Where are the fruits? Matthew 5, verse 43:

Matthew 5

AKJV

⁴³ You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.

⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you;

Why?

Matthew 5

AKJV

⁴⁵ That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

⁴⁶ For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? do not even the publicans the same?

I guess you don’t go to bars. If you did, you’d see how jolly they all are with each other; they’re all buddies. Verse 47:

Matthew 5

AKJV

⁴⁷ And if you salute your brothers only, what do you more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Oh, they greet their friends. I make it a point—anytime I see a black person, I greet them. Anytime I see a Muslim, I greet them. Anytime I see somebody who is totally different than I am, I greet them. I open the door for them. I let them go first. Why? Because that's what Jesus would have done. You know, this is *important stuff*. We cannot be like the world. Let's go to Romans 12. There has to be a difference in the way we act and the way the world acts. Romans 12, verse 1. This is the apostle Paul:

Romans 1

AKJV

¹ I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

² And be not conformed to this world[.]

As soon as these things happened this past week, we ended up with two camps. The one camp saying, "Black lives matter." *You bet they do!* So do white lives, yellow lives, *all lives*. "We've got to look after the police!" Of course we ought to. But why should these be two camps? Okay now, you're a Christian—which camp do you belong to? Well, my answer there is: *neither*. I wept for the people who got shot by the police. It's not my job to judge the system that will do that, but somebody died. Have you ever seen somebody die in front of you? Do you know what it's like? I remember my one brother—he was an officer in the fire department—and somebody was yak-yak-yak-yakking in the bus, and he turned to this person and said, "Excuse me, lady." She said, "Yes?" He said, "Have you ever seen somebody die?" She said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I mean, have you ever stood there and seen somebody die because they were injured or if they were shot, or whatever, and they literally *died in your hands*? Have you ever seen that?" She said, "Oh, no!" He said, "Well, if you had, you wouldn't be talking like you're talking." (It was my brother Johnny. He was quite a character, but he was an officer in the fire department.)

What would it be like for you, if *you* were in that car, with that four-year-old in the back seat turning to her mom and saying to mom, "It's going to be all right, Mommy! It's going to be all right!?" It's not going to be right. It was dreadful. What would it be like for you, is that was your brother—one of those policeman. When I first switched the TV on, they said, "Four policemen are dead." Later, like the score from some game, it changed from four to five. And then I wondered, "Is it going to change again?" Thankfully it didn't; thank God for that.

Be not conformed to this world. I have been astounded how many times so-called Christians have come to me and spouted forth *hatred*—hatred to people they know nothing about. Frankly, I'm tired of it. I am *tired* of it. For the first time, this week, I understood what the apostle Paul went through. If you'll go to the Book of Acts—Acts, the thirteenth chapter. Sometimes I think I'm too old for this. Then God reminds me I'm not *that* old. Acts 13, verse 44. This is the apostle Paul preaching on the Sabbath.

Acts 13

AKJV

⁴⁴ And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

He was preaching to the multitudes.

Acts 13

AKJV

⁴⁵ But when the Jews [...]

The ones you would *expect* to have an open ear to the truth.

Acts 13

AKJV

⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, see, we turn to the Gentiles.

The Jews didn't want to learn. So Paul said, "Okay, we're going to the Gentiles." Now, amazingly, as you go through the Book of Acts you find they didn't immediately go to the Gentiles. No, they still preached to the Jews. But go to chapter 18, verse 1:

Acts 18

AKJV

¹ After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

² And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) [...]

Interesting little sidelight, they just put in there. Verse four:

Acts 18

AKJV

⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

⁵ And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

⁶ And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said to them, Your blood be on your own heads; I am clean; from now on I will go to the Gentiles.

I'm tired of talking to so-called Christians who talk hate. I don't know what you would have done with Jesus, who ate with the prostitutes and the public and the sinners. Maybe what we should do is just go off and go preach to those poor people.

We've had a sad week in the United States. I wept, I literally wept, when I saw a man being shot in the street. I wept when I saw the Facebook posting by a woman that did not even realize that the man in the car with her was dying—and then I saw him die. As I said, I had a premonition that some bad person was going to try to shoot a policeman—and minutes later it happened. Not one—five *killed*—others injured in the hospital. We live in terrible times. They're only going to get *more* terrible. What must I do? I cannot get involved with the politics of the world. I cannot get involved with right or left or whoever else. I cannot fill my ears with one TV station or another or one radio station or another, so that I get swept by the winds. I can't afford that. I don't have that kind of time to waste. *Nor have you*, unless you are just a little child. But even then, don't waste your time. Now's the time we must decide we want to be Christians, in the real sense of the word—even willing to lay down our lives for our friends, and even lay down our lives for our enemies.

I was walking out of a sports park in Johannesburg, South Africa. Crowds were pushing, shoving to get out. I was just taking my time. And I saw there was a man who, from everything he was doing, he seemed like he had forgotten something inside. So he's trying to turn around, come back through the crowds. And he was saying, "Excuse me, excuse me, excuse me." And some people would let him through; others, kind of, moaned. And then when he got to the gate, one man just took him and *shoved* him aside. And I saw his head just go sideways and *smack* right on the metal pole, and he staggered from there. And I just saw *blood*. And I headed up to him. (I always have a handkerchief in this pocket.) I took my handkerchief (it was a white one), I took it out and I shoved it on his head. He had a big gash on the side of his head. I shoved it on there and I helped him over to the first aid room (fortunately, I knew where it was). I took him over there and deposited him there, and they jumped on him, taking care of him. I had his blood all over me. You know what my church friends said when they heard the story? They said, "Weren't you scared of AIDS?" I guess I should have been. South Africa's got the highest AIDS rate of any country in the world. I didn't even think about it. A man was bleeding; I was going to stop the bleeding. That's all I thought about.

My wife and I were in what's called the Indian market—a Muslim market. A fight broke out somewhere and they started shooting. I went outside and here's this man laying, laying there with a bullet hole right *here*. I knelt next to him. I checked his vitals—they were all right—but he was in shock. It was freezing cold. So I told the people there, "Bring a blanket! Bring a couple of blankets; we've got to wrap this man up. He could die of shock." These Indians went off and brought some blankets, and we wrapped him up. Then the ambulance people came to pick him up. The man was a Muslim. So what? So what? I hope, if the roles were reversed, he would have done the same thing.

Oh, if only we could find a little handful of people who would *really be Christian*, in every sense of the word—who would be willing to *give their lives for humanity*. Maybe then, we *would* get something accomplished. We live in serious times, brethren.

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