



THE BEACON BEAM

February 2026

TRUTH TO CHALLENGE THE SOUL



PROTECTION, NOT PUNISHMENT

*A church having a security team fits well within
the Christian moral tradition.*

by Andrew T. Walker

After leftist activists intruded into a Southern Baptist church in Minnesota—disrupting worship, frightening children, and intimidating congregants—a predictable question follows: *If Christians are commanded to love their enemies and not resist an evildoer, how can churches justify security teams?*

The answer is straightforward. Scripture's commands to love one's enemy (Matthew 5:44), to "not resist an evildoer," and to "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39) are not invitations to martyrdom, nor are they mandates for institutional negligence. They are moral commands aimed at

restraining revenge, confronting injustice through moral defiance, and restoring proper order. They do not abolish the responsibility to protect one's own life or the safety of others.

Start with first principles. The Sixth Commandment prohibits murder; it does not prohibit self-defense. From Augustine through Aquinas to the Reformers, the Christian moral tradition has consistently distinguished between legitimate defense of life and bloodlust, revenge, or the desire to kill. Loving oneself and loving others entails taking appropriate and proportional action to protect both. Prudence, law, and defense are not

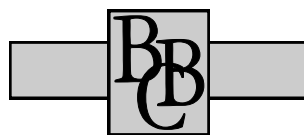
negated by Christian love. Love will ensure that prudence, law, and defense are properly ordered.

The point of Jesus's teaching is to interrupt cycles of retributive escalation, not to require cooperation with evil indefinitely or the absorption of unlimited harm. An evildoer, moreover, jeopardizes his own claim to non-injury when he creates moral *danger zones* through unjust action. Responsibility for risk to the evildoer does not rest with those who seek to stop him.

Jesus's commands to "turn the other
(Continued on page 2)

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Gregory L. Phillips, *Minister of Music*
N. Hunter Strength, *Minister of Youth*

Sunday

Morning Worship...9:30 AM
Sunday School.....11:10 AM
Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

Wednesday

Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM
IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM
Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

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cheek” and to “not resist an evildoer” address personal retaliation; that is, the instinct to return insult for insult, violence for violence, pride for pride. The verb in Matthew 5:39 carries the sense of violent retaliation, not every form of resistance whatsoever. Jesus is rejecting the *lex talionis* logic of personal vengeance, not abolishing prudence, law, or defense. Jesus is calling for principled restraint, not unleashed force by all means available.

Nothing in this teaching nullifies the moral duty of pastors and elders to protect those entrusted to their care. A father who locks his doors at night is not violating the Sermon on the Mount. A church that stations trained, restrained security personnel is doing the same thing at a communal level.

Nor does “love your enemies” require moral confusion about what an enemy is doing. Love is not sentimentalism. Love is ordered to truth and the good. Sometimes loving your enemy means refusing to allow him to victimize others—or himself—through unjust conduct. Treating someone as a criminal when he commits a crime is not hatred; it is moral clarity and moral justice. It is for the good of evildoers that their actions be restrained and their behavior be named as criminal. Anything less is a dismissal of moral responsibility on its own terms, undermining our understanding of human dignity and agency.

This is where many modern Christians have been catechized into confusion. We are told that love and accountability are opposites. We are told that a radical love for Jesus means reckless self-abandonment in the face of evil. They are not. While situations of martyrdom will certainly arise—for which we must be willing to bear witness where no alternative is available—a willingness to be a martyr does not forbid seeking an

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outlet to escape. We are not called to give callous disregard for our lives—we are, after all, each image bearers ourselves called to extend dignity to our own persons. Scripture presupposes systems of justice, punishment, and restraint. Jail is not the negation of Christian ethics. In many cases, it is the precondition for repentance, rehabilitation, and restoration. Confinement can be merciful when it interrupts cycles of harm and creates space for moral reckoning.

A church security team, properly conceived, is neither a militia nor a vigilante force. It is not an instrument of fear or aggression. It is a ministry of ordered protection—trained to de-escalate, observe, intervene proportionately, and involve lawful authorities when necessary. The goal is not domination but peace. We seek not violence but prevention. Our aim is not punishment but protection.

The alternative to security is not some higher form of Christian virtue.

It is often irresponsibility baptized as piety. When churches refuse to prepare for real threats, they do not display radical faith; they outsource risk to the most vulnerable in the congregation, especially children, the elderly, and the unsuspecting.

The Christian moral tradition has always rejected two equal and opposite errors: pacifist absolutism, which denies the legitimacy of defense, and vengeful coercion, which delights in violence. The narrow road between them is moral action governed by restraint under just authority, guided by love of neighbor and respect for human dignity, including the dignity of those who do wrong.

Christians are called to be peacemakers, not doormats. Establishing moral guardrails and protecting the congregation is not abandoning love. To recognize that some people intend harm is moral realism in a fallen world. Stopping evil’s advance is Christian love.

Churches that establish sober, disciplined security teams are not betraying the gospel. They are acting in accordance with it: protecting the flock (Acts 20:28-29), honoring the image of God in the congregation as a whole, and refusing to confuse Christian love with an invitation to chaos.

Andrew T. Walker is the managing editor of WORLD Opinions and serves as associate professor of Christian ethics at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is also a fellow with The Ethics and Public Policy Center.

2025 STEP-DOWN REPORT

by Greg Barkman

Beacon Baptist Church has allowed me to take one week each month away from pastoral duties. This is for the purpose of preserving my strength and extending my ability to continue ministry in my senior years. It's hard for me to believe that I will be seventy-eight in April, but the calendar doesn't lie. Another purpose is to help the church think about eventual transition which we know is coming, we just don't know when. I can happily report that this plan is working well and will continue unchanged into 2026. I find this schedule refreshing physically, mentally, and spiritually. A third purpose is to allow time to do some of the things I have been unable to do during nearly fifty-three years of busy ministry. Most people retire in their sixties, allowing them the freedom to pursue activities that a demanding work schedule makes difficult. I find this step-down schedule gives me the best of both worlds. I am continuing in the ministry which I dearly love, but am also able to enjoy some of the activities that prompt people to retire. What have Marti and I done with the step-down schedule last year?

VISITED WITH FAMILY. Spending quality time with family is difficult in a demanding ministry. But last year, we were able to visit all four of our married daughters and their families at least once or more. In January, we enjoyed a week-end visit with Joel and Jessica. We were able to worship with them on Sunday, converse over a meal out, and just enjoy relaxed visiting, a rare treat for me. Marti is able to visit with Jessica a few times a month, but my work demands and Joel's work schedule make it challenging to get together. What a joy to

spend a weekend with them in January and again in November.

We spent several days in Greenville, SC, in April, with Eric and Cherith and their four active children. Eric is also a busy pastor, so being able to spend time with them in their home and worship with them in their church is a special blessing. We were in Greenville again for a short visit in December, and we relish these occasions which have been too rare in years gone by.

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Gabe and Jordana and their two children in Holly Springs, NC, were the focus of our step-down week in August. They moved into a larger home last year, and we enjoyed exploring their new surroundings, worshipping with them in their church in Cary, and eating with them in a nice restaurant for Sunday brunch.

September took us to Belfast, Maine, to visit Warren and Bethany

Allgrove and their three active boys. We have visited them every year for more than ten years, utilizing a vacation week, and we eagerly look forward to this every year. The Allgrove's live on a little farm in Morrill, and it keeps them very busy and tied to home. Since they can seldom travel to North Carolina, visiting them in Maine is one of the highlights of our year. We consume nutritious home-cooked meals of farm fresh produce and hormone free meat and eggs, take delightful day trips to interesting places, and worship with them in their church.

We took Meadow and Noah Duncan with us during another step-down week to North Myrtle Beach, where we read "Castaway Kid" together, a fascinating biography which kept them gripped in anticipation for the next chapter. How I thank God for these precious opportunities. Yes, this new schedule affords us more time with family, for which we thank the Lord.

VISITED WITH FRIENDS. We were also able to spend refreshing time with a few friends along the way. We were thrilled to visit with David and Carol Graham in Covington, KY, former members of Beacon who moved away for new opportunities more than forty-five years ago. We worshipped in their church and feasted at one of their favorite restaurants as we caught up on old times, learned about some of their activities over the past decades, as well as some history of their lives before we met them in 1973. We came away with a fresh appreciation for the grace of God in directing and utilizing His dear children.

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We enjoyed a few days with Dale and Juanita Wallace, a fellow pastor who has become precious to us over the years. It's encouraging to converse with friends who understand the joys and trials of ministry and with whom we can share burdens that only another pastor and wife can understand. We pray together and rejoice in the goodness of God in answered prayers. We always leave these visits with fresh enthusiasm for the work of ministry.

VISITED MUSEUMS. We had talked about visiting the Ark Encounter in Kentucky for years, but were never able to fit it into our schedule. Finally, we were able to go in October, and it was better than we imagined. The Ark is one of two interesting and informative museums inaugurated by Answers in Genesis, a ministry founded by Ken Ham to fortify Christians in understanding some of the scientific evidence for the Biblical account of creation. The Creation Museum is about forty minutes drive from the Ark Encounter, and you should include both when you go. We were informed and inspired and hope to return some day.

TRAVELED ABROAD. We have talked about visiting Ireland, and the opportunity materialized in May last year. We carefully chose six locations encircling the island, spending two nights in each place. It proved to be an excellent plan. We rented a car, which gave us freedom to explore, and were able to see a lot of this beautiful island from east to west and north to south. One highlight was a lunch meeting with Sarah Butler who has followed our pulpit ministry through Sermon Audio for years and thanked us warmly for providing sound Bible instruction in her town of Limerick, where solid gospel churches are scarce. We would love to return to Ireland, but with so many places to go, that may or may not happen. Time will tell.

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VISITED CHURCHES. One of the delights of travel is being able to worship with God's people in a variety of churches, large and small. The largest was Shepherd's Church in Cary, NC, a thriving congregation expositing God's Word in a strategic location. North Island Baptist at Hilton Head, SC was smallest with no more than twenty present to hear an excellent sermon from an able expositor. A large congregation of about seven hundred worships at historic Independent Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Georgia. I'm glad to report that this church, established in 1755, continues to believe and proclaim the Biblical gospel today. Another small congregation was Reformed Baptist Church in Boone, NC, with about thirty-five in attendance. Dependent upon a rented building, they are never-the-less committed to establishing a faithful testimony for Christ. We enjoyed a Reformed Baptist Church in Waterford, Southern Ireland, and learned about a number of sister churches scattered throughout the country. In Northern Ireland, we worshipped at Martyr's Memorial Presbyterian Church, founded by the late Dr. Ian Paisley. The auditorium, which seats more than two thousand

was so crowded in Paisley's day that people came forty minutes early to find a seat. Today, the congregation is small but committed and vibrant as they carry on the legacy of one of the twentieth century's gospel giants. In Maine, we joined Bethany and family in a growing congregation that also needs a building of their own. We enjoy worshipping with Joel and Jessica in Greensboro, as well as Eric and Cherith in Greenville, SC. Adding Calvary Baptist in Covington, KY, to Westminster Presbyterian in Lancaster, PA, plus Anchor Baptist in North Myrtle Beach, SC, concludes our roster of churches in 2025. Beacon Baptist remains our favorite place to worship and we return from every trip with a new appreciation for what the Lord has done and is continuing to do here. I would encourage you to worship with a Bible-believing church when you are away from home. It will do you good.

TIME TOGETHER. It may sound like we are always with others but in reality, we also enjoy a good many days of quality time alone. There is something refreshing in getting away from the routine demands of life that enlivens marriage relationships. Marti and I will celebrate our fifty-sixth wedding anniversary in May. I am thankful to report that our marriage is stronger than ever, that we love one another more than ever, that we delight to be partners in ministry as well as parents and grandparents together. We have so much for which to be thankful. Our hearts are full and our cup is running over. We are amazed at God's kindness to us over all these many years. All this, and heaven too! How good is the Lord we adore.

On the Feminine Side

by Mary Shaw

Mary Shaw, long a member of Beacon and a treasured friend of many 'old timers', experienced a life-changing event in May, 1981, at age twenty six. Twenty years later, she wrote of the event that left her in a wheelchair. Her memories appeared on this page in March, 2002. Many of you have not met Mary and her sister Carol, and that is your loss. Take time to read this testimony of grace in the face of tragic circumstances. You'll be amazed.

Marti Barkman

The afternoon of May 12th, 1981, was much the same as any other school day. The children in my fourth-grade class were hot, tired, and eager to go home. I closed the class in prayer and ended with a phrase I used each afternoon: "Lord, please protect these little kids as they go home. Don't let anything happen to them, and help each one to be back in school tomorrow, ready to learn more about You." Little did I know that I would be unable to return to school the next day.

The school year was drawing to a close, and with it came special projects, achievement tests, and overall excitement. However, the past few days had been particularly tiring for me. I had spent long hours poring over achievement-test scores, class-analysis charts, and North Carolina notebooks, when I began to experience a tight sensation in my neck and shoulders. I attributed the discomfort to the position in which I had been sitting and expected it to subside. I had always dismissed aches and pains. Having played nearly every major and minor sport, I was accustomed to pulled ligaments and strained muscles. This was no different.

However, after an exhausting weekend, I returned to school only to

find that I was unable to write on the chalkboard. The pain in my shoulder had not subsided but had traveled into my right arm. I completed the school day, but only minutes later, at home, was overcome with excruciating pain. Fortunately, a friend had stopped by for a visit and was able to rush me to the hospital where she worked. By the time I arrived, the pain had greatly diminished. I was given some muscle relaxers and a suggestion to see my doctor the next morning.

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I arrived early Tuesday morning, the 12th, at my cardiologist's office, where he did an EKG and prescribed some more muscle relaxers. Then, much to my surprise, he requested I stay and discuss with him a slight heart disorder. He assured me that I need not worry about the malfunction but that I needed to be aware of the problem. I left his office satisfied that all was well and returned to complete the school day, unaware that I was also completing a major segment of my life.

After a hectic night of grading

reports, I had my devotions and went to sleep. Fifteen minutes later I was awakened by a sickening throb in my right arm. Within minutes I felt as if fiery bolts of electricity were striking throughout my entire body. Screaming in pain, I walked to the car and was rushed to the hospital. I arrived there twenty minutes later, completely paralyzed from the neck down, and had to be carried inside.

I was taken to the emergency room and examined. It was suggested that I stay overnight until my doctor could be reached, and that my parents go home. The pain was intense, but it could not be alleviated. The nurse insisted that no medication could be administered until my doctor arrived. I continued to plead for help, but the nurse abruptly replied, "You're going to have to settle down. There is nothing physically wrong with you," implying that I had only a psychological problem.

On the morning of the 13th, my doctor arrived. By this time I was cyanotic because of partial paralysis of my respiratory system, and I was able to move only my head. My doctor proceeded to explain to my parents that he felt I was simply having an emotional reaction to the news regarding my heart that I had received the morning before. It was at that point that my mother abruptly suggested that a myelogram be performed to see if there could be something wrong with my spinal cord. The doctor agreed and proceeded with the test. After having been paralyzed for approximately twelve hours, I was finally diagnosed as having an arteriovenous malformation. My blood vessels had entangled my spinal cord like roots on a tree and had cut off my blood supply, leaving me paralyzed.

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I was quickly rushed to another hospital, where a neurosurgeon performed intricate surgery to decompress my cord. Afterwards the doctors informed my parents that only time would tell if I ever moved again. Mother told one doctor that she had faith that if God wanted me to move again, I would move. He said that she could believe whatever she wanted, but he would have to believe what he knew to be true: if I could endure

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the next few hours, I would probably still have to be institutionalized for the rest of my life.

I did survive those critical hours. In fact, I even celebrated my twenty-seventh birthday during the three-weeks' stay in the intensive care unit. On the morning of the 19th, I awoke to the sound of muffled voices. I sensed that something unusual was happening but was too groggy to understand. Within minutes my entire room was rearranged, and my bed was now adjacent to the window.

The nurses turned me on my side and told me to look outside. With glazed eyes I beheld something I would never forget. My entire class of fourth graders was standing out in the rain two stories below, holding a large “Happy Birthday” banner. Many children shared binoculars,

trying to catch a glimpse of their teacher. I tried, too, to recognize the children, as someone held binoculars for me, but I was unable to see through my tears. A photographer and reporter were able to share these few emotional minutes with thousands of others through our local newspapers. Letters began pouring in from people touched by my testimony. I believe these words of spiritual encouragement have played a major part in my recovery.

After the respirator was removed, I had to undergo hours of therapy to restore my lungs to their normal function. One morning the intensive care unit was flooded with three-part harmony. My friend Janice, my sister, and I began singing....Soon the room was filled with nurses and doctors. They could not understand how someone in my condition could have anything to sing about, much less the physical ability to do it. It was at that point that I fully understood that if I never moved again, I could still be a witness for Christ....However, God did choose to allow me to move again. Within two weeks I was able to move the fingers of my hand and raise my arms. I knew the Great Physician was continuing to work miracles.

Soon I was transported to a rehabilitation center in another city. There I spent the next few months undergoing hours of strenuous therapy, trying to build up the few muscles that remained. I also learned to write again with a special writing splint. The same hand that had enabled me to win trophies in sports, play music on many instruments, and form delicate letters in calligraphy was now just a limp, withered hand, with tightly closed fingers.

After weeks of practicing with my writing splint, I finally was able to form my first sentence: “I am crucified with Christ...” I finished my “life verse,” Galatians 2:20, and left it with my therapist. She, like so many others, could not understand

how I could still have faith and trust in God, after He allowed such a horrible thing to happen. Many frequently asked why I was not bitter. By most expectations I was never supposed to move again. How could I be bitter toward God, Who had allowed me to regain so much of what I had lost? I may not fully understand why God chose me to suffer, but I can say, as Job did, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

It has now been more than twenty years since the onset of my illness. Having been through various major and minor surgeries during this time, I have truly learned about “waiting patiently on the Lord.” I do not know what the future holds....I may not understand my suffering now, but I have learned that one cannot put a question mark where God puts a period. For though the battles are sometimes quite severe, the victory that we have through our Lord Jesus Christ is glorious.

Carrying On

I was heading into my fifth year of teaching at Vandalia Christian School when circumstances caused me to temporarily move back home. My sudden paralysis was just as big a shock to my parents as it was to me! I now faced many barriers as a wheelchair user. Daddy knew that he would need to make several changes to our house that he himself had built shortly after returning home from Iwo Jima in World War II. He began to work, made the house totally accessible, and as I write this, I am sitting in the same bedroom where I became paralyzed nearly 45 years ago. We lost our strong but gentle Marine in 2001. His walk on earth was over. Daddy was tired, took a nap, and a few minutes later God carried him Home.

In 1981, Mother had just retired

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from her job at Vandalia and as she was about to begin her “life of leisure,” God carried her down a different path. She graciously accepted the role of becoming what I quickly realized was the finest caregiver anyone could ever have. We shared a special bond, and we continued to care for each other until her death which occurred well into her 97th year.

My sister Carol and I remain in our childhood home where we share so many memories, but her memories are beginning to slowly fade. She was recently diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. Now family and friends are often called on to carry her back to forgotten times now vanished. Carol was so good to assume the role of “caregiver” for me decades ago but now we both share that title as God

allows us to care for each other.

Our brother Bruce, a former paramedic, unexpectedly became the full-time caregiver for his wife while she suffered through a brief illness which eventually took her life in 2021. It was Bruce who carried me in his arms to the emergency room the night I suddenly became paralyzed. When I returned home from rehab, he continued to provide a great deal of support and even physical therapy for me. His medical background has proven to be invaluable throughout our journeys. Today he resumes his caregiving service as he comes so often to help Carol and me in the many ways he can.

I am reminded of an old gospel song that states, “I’m so glad I’m a part of the family of God.” But I am

also grateful that God has allowed me to be a part of my special family. How precious it is to have been reared by strong Christian caregivers who have cared about not only our bodies but about our souls. In our daily walk with God, we sometimes realize that we are not always walking but are being carried. We are carried down different paths, carried back in time, carried into new realms of possibilities, and sometimes carried Home. We all need each other as we stumble through this life. As a congregation of family and friends, may the Lord find us faithful caregivers and may we eagerly long to hear His “Well done!”



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Monday thru Friday

WNAH 1360 AM (Nashville, TN)	2:00 p.m.
WITA 1490 AM (Knoxville, TN)	9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	12:15 p.m.
WBAG 105.9 FM (Burlington, NC)	12:15 p.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	2:00 p.m.
WDZY 1290 AM (Richmond, VA)	6:15 a.m.
	10:00 a.m.
WDZY 103.3 FM (Richmond, VA)	6:15 a.m.
	10:00 a.m.
WSKY 1230 AM (Asheville, NC)	7:15 a.m.
WYYC 1250 AM (York, PA)	5:00 p.m.
WYYC 98.1 FM (York, PA)	5:00 p.m.

Monday thru Sunday

WXTH-LP 101.7 FM (Richwood, WV) 10:05 a.m.
10:05 p.m.

Sunday

WCRU 960 AM (Charlotte, NC)	9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WDRU 1030 AM (Raleigh, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WLES 590 AM (Richmond, VA)	10:30 a.m.

WGNQ mixlr.com/wgng-radio (M-F)
8:45-9 a.m. & 4:45-5:00 p.m.
(Internet station based in Greenville/Washington, NC)

Saturday

WNAH 1360 AM (Nashville, TN)	2:00 p.m.
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BEACON HIGHLIGHTS FOR FEBRUARY

CALENDAR

01 ESL (English as a Second Language)
03 Coffee n' Courage
04 Annual Business Meeting
07 The Forge (Men's Bible Study)
08 Lord's Table
10 ESL
10 Coffee n' Courage
11 Elders/Deacons Meeting
11 IMPACT Club
15 ESL
15 Members Meeting
17 Coffee n' Courage
18 IMPACT Club
19 Silver Saints
22 ESL
25 IMPACT Club

MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

03 Joanna Isley
04 Mae Counts
 Hazel Garcia
06 Rob Conrad
07 Wendy Lynch
14 Pam Owens
19 Mike Kelleher
21 Tommy Blanchard
22 Amanda Abernathy
24 Larry Byrd
25 Trinity LaTour
26 Sherry Kane
 Greg Mullis
 Larry Norris

MISSIONARY BIRTHDAYS

08 Gabriel Bixby*
 20 Miriam Bixby*

 *Children of Missionaries

*We express our heartfelt sympathy
to the families of:*

Deborah Kiser
 Louis Simon
 Robin Lynn Price Vestal
 Robert Wolgemuth

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