

Condemning wickedness

The problem

There are some Christians who insist that we cannot ever judge anyone at any time, and especially not Christians. This is based upon texts like, 'Judge not, that you be not judged,' (Matt 7:1). However, the context here is specifically about hypocritical judging. Jesus himself made many judgments of men, some with great vitriol, if he meant that no one can ever judge anything, then he too would have been a hypocrite. Clearly all such texts have to be judged on the basis of context and what they are actually teaching. In fact there are very many texts which command us to judge (Deut 16:18; Lk 12:57; Jn 7:24; Rm 12:2; 1 Cor 2:15; Eph 5:10; Phil 1:10; 1 Thess 5:21; 1 Jn 4:1), so insisting that there is never to be any critical assessment is plainly foolish.

This refusal to judge is what has caused the modern church to fall too pieces and collapse into the worst apostasy in the history of the church. In greater days, such as the Reformation, there was an equal mix of sound teaching, coupled with critical judgment of error. The result was edification. Would that we had that today.

However, some, while accepting that there is a need to confront and judge error in the church, feel that there is no command for further judgment, such as neighbours, relatives or the government. So, in the face of appalling injustice and oppression they sit on their hands and say nothing. Is this correct? In my view it is not only incorrect but it is a sin, plain and simple. It is never correct to ignore evil when it confronts you. Complacency is not a fruit of the Spirit.

There are two reasons for this. The first is that a believer has simply not read the Bible sufficiently or carefully enough. The denunciation of evil is present from cover to cover and godly examples were set by pious men in every age of Scripture, who openly condemned evil in men, governments and the church. The testimony of the most godly man in history (outside the Lord Jesus), Enoch (who was spared dying) is, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him', (Jude 14-15). The only quote we have from Enoch is his condemnation of iniquity. Apart from the fact that prophetic books are filled with condemnation, Jesus also, in his earthly ministry, frequently condemned wickedness and even individual sinners; on occasion he even asserted that certain individuals were doomed to hell.

The second reason is that they do see this but their cultural background overpowers the examples in Scripture and they fail to apply what they see. The great danger here is that they not only fail to do what they are commanded, and set a poor example as an ambassador, but they often castigate those that do speak openly about the iniquity around them, especially wickedness in high places. I have often been the brunt of this having been shouted at and had doors slammed in my face (by Christians) for speaking about the terrible unrighteousness and oppression of the poor by civil governments.

The believer is commanded by God to be a testimony on the earth of what is going on in heaven. The believer is an ambassador of God and is required to give a judgment about

things on earth from God's perspective. Thus when the believer sees the poor and needy being oppressed, he speaks out condemning it as evil.

Now I have explained this before in other papers, but here I want to give an exhaustive list of Scriptural quotations to seal the matter once and for all. The Scripture demands that we condemn evil; if we do not condemn it, we condone it, and we have to consider the example that we set to others.

God's concern for the poor and needy

God cares for the poor

If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. Deut 15:7-8

For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.' Deut 15:11

You shall not oppress a hired servant *who is* poor and needy. Deut 24:14

God is focused upon the oppression of the poor and needy

The wicked have drawn the sword and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, to slay those who are of upright conduct. Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. Ps 37:14-15

He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor. Ps 72:4

For He will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and *him* who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy, and will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; and precious shall be their blood in His sight. Ps 72:12

He raises the poor out of the dust, *and* lifts the needy out of the ash heap. Ps 113:7

He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, but he who honours Him has mercy on the needy. Prov 14:31

O LORD, You *are* my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, For You have done wonderful *things*; Your counsels of old *are* faithfulness *and* truth. ... For You have been a strength to the poor, A strength to the needy in his distress, A refuge from the storm, A shade from the heat; For the blast of the terrible ones *is* as a storm *against* the wall. Isa 25:1-4

Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother.' But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the LORD of hosts. Zech 7:9-12

God's judgment on those who ignore the poor

Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow. Deut 27:19

Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard. Prov 21:13

He who oppresses the poor to increase his *riches*, and he who gives to the rich, *will surely come to poverty*. Prov 22:16

He who gives to the poor will not lack, but he who hides his eyes will have many curses. Prov 28:17

There is a generation whose teeth *are like* swords, and whose fangs *are like* knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from *among* men. Prov 30:14

If he has oppressed the poor and needy, ... Shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these abominations, he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him. Ezek 18:12-13

Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone, yet you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: afflicting the just *and* taking bribes; diverting the poor *from justice* at the gate. Amos 5:11-12

The warnings of God to rulers

Your princes *are* rebellious, and companions of thieves; everyone loves bribes, and follows after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them.

Isa 1:23

The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders of His people and His princes: 'For you have eaten up the vineyard; the plunder of the poor *is* in your houses. What do you mean by crushing My people and grinding the faces of the poor?' Says the Lord GOD of hosts. Isa 3:14-15

Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees, who write misfortune, *which* they have prescribed to rob the needy of justice, and to take what is right from the poor of My people, that widows may be their prey, and *that* they may rob the fatherless. What will you do in the day of punishment, and in the desolation *which* will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help? Isa 10:1-3

Thus says the LORD: 'Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.' Jer 22:3

Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by *being* righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to *the* poor. Dan 4:27

Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone, yet you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: afflicting the just *and* taking bribes; diverting the poor *from justice* at the gate. Amos 5:11-12

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What Scripture says regarding the condemnatory actions of God and his prophets

The critical principle

The LORD *is* in His holy temple, the LORD's throne *is* in heaven; his eyes behold, his eyelids test the sons of men. Ps 11:4

The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good. Prov 15:3

Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD *are* on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth. Amos 9:8

Thus God, who watches everything, holds wicked governments in contempt and promises judgment upon them. Believers should therefore, reflect this judgment and must certainly not support them.

God holds the wicked in contempt right now

For You *are* not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. Ps 5:4-5

The wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Ps 11:5

The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn the sword and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, to slay those who are of upright conduct. Their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. Ps 37:12-15

When the wicked are cut off, you shall see *it*. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a native green tree. Yet he passed away, and behold, he *was no more*; indeed I sought him, but he could not be found. ... the transgressors shall be destroyed together; the future of the wicked shall be cut off. Ps 37:34-38

The face of the LORD *is* against those who do evil. 1 Pt 3:12

God rebukes the wicked, even temporally in this life, and we should be like him

You rebuke the proud -- the cursed, who stray from Your commandments. Ps 119:21

The schemes of the schemer *are* evil; he devises wicked plans to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaks justice. Isa 32:7

Behold, I will watch over them for adversity and not for good. And all the men of Judah who *are* in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, until there is an end to them. Jer 44:27

If he has oppressed the poor and needy, robbed by violence, ... Shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these abominations, he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him. Ezek 18:12-13

The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger. Ezek 22:29

Therefore, because you tread down the poor and take grain taxes from him, though you have built houses of hewn stone, yet you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine from them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: afflicting the just *and* taking bribes; diverting the poor *from justice* at the gate. Amos 5:11-12

Therefore thus says the LORD: 'Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; Your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; Your land shall be divided by *survey* line; You shall die in a defiled land.' Amos 7:17

Samaria is held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God. They shall fall by the sword, their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child ripped open. Hosea 13:16

God's prophets observe and speak of the iniquity in high places

Moreover I saw under the sun: *in* the place of judgment, wickedness *was* there; and *in* the place of righteousness, iniquity *was* there. Eccles 3:16

Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: and look! The tears of the oppressed, but they have no comforter -- On the side of their oppressors *there is* power, but they have no comforter. Eccles 4:1

O LORD, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" And You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; there is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds. Habb 1:2-4

God's prophets confronted wicked rulers for their oppressions, denouncing their unrighteousness, threatening judgment and condemnation.

So Moses and Aaron came in to Pharaoh and said to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: "How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me. Or else, if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory".' Ex 10:3-4

Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees, who write misfortune, *which* they have prescribed to rob the needy of justice, and to take what is right from the poor of My people, that widows may be their prey, and *that* they may rob the fatherless. What will you do in the day of punishment. Isa 10:1-3

Therefore it shall come to pass, when the LORD has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, *that He will say*, 'I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks.' Isa 10:12

'Behold, I *am* against you, O inhabitant of the valley, *and* rock of the plain,' says the LORD, 'Who say, "Who shall come down against us? Or who shall enter our dwellings?" But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings,' says the LORD; 'I will kindle a fire in its forest, and it shall devour all things around it.' Jer 21:13-14

'Behold, I *am* against you, O most haughty one!' says the Lord GOD of hosts; 'For your day has come, the time *that* I will punish you. The most proud shall stumble and fall, and no one will raise him up; I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it will devour all around him.' Jer 50:31-32

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Indeed I, even I, *am* against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. Therefore fathers shall eat *their* sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds. Therefore, *as* I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish *you*; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them. Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon them, and I will be avenged; and they shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* in My zeal, when I have spent My fury upon them. Moreover I will make you a waste and a reproach among the nations that *are* all around you, in the sight of all who pass by. So it shall be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, and an astonishment to the nations that *are* all around you, when I execute judgments among you in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I, the LORD, have spoken. When I send against them the terrible arrows of famine which shall be for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, I will increase the famine upon you and cut off your supply of bread. So I will send

against you famine and wild beasts, and they will bereave you. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I, the LORD, have spoken.' Ezek 5:8-17

'Her princes in her midst *are* like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain. ... The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger. ... Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads,' says the Lord GOD. Ezek 22:27-31

Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because your heart *is* lifted up, And you say, 'I *am* a god, I sit *in* the seat of gods, In the midst of the seas,' Yet you *are* a man, and not a god, Though you set your heart as the heart of a god ... Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers against you, The most terrible of the nations; And they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom, And defile your splendour. They shall throw you down into the Pit, And you shall die the death of the slain In the midst of the seas". Ezek 28:2-8

'You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, *but* you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. So they were scattered because *there was* no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching *for them*. 'Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: '*as* I live,' says the Lord GOD, ... 'Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more.' Ezek 34:3-10

"Behold, O Mount Seir, I am against you; I will stretch out My hand against you, And make you most desolate; I shall lay your cities waste, And you shall be desolate. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. Because you have had an ancient hatred, and have shed the blood of the children of Israel by the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, when their iniquity came to an end, therefore, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; since you have not hated blood, therefore blood shall pursue you. Thus I will make Mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it the one who leaves and the one who returns. And I will fill its mountains with the slain; on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those who are slain by the sword shall fall. I will make you perpetually desolate, and your cities shall be uninhabited; then you shall know that I am the LORD. Because you have said, 'These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess them,' although the LORD was there, "therefore, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "I will do according to your anger and according to the envy which you showed in your hatred against them; and I will make Myself known among them when I judge you. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. I have heard all your blasphemies which you have spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, 'They are desolate; they are given to us to consume.' Thus with your mouth you have boasted against Me and multiplied your words against Me; I have heard them." Thus says the Lord GOD: "The whole earth will rejoice when I make you desolate. As you rejoiced because the inheritance of the house of Israel was desolate, so I will do to you; you shall be desolate, O Mount Seir, as well as all of Edom -- all of it! Then they shall know that I am the LORD." Ezek 35:3-15

Thus says the LORD: 'For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its *punishment*, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals.' Amos 2:6

'Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say: "Assemble on the mountains of Samaria; see great tumults in her midst, and the oppressed within her. For they do not know to do right,"" Says the LORD, 'Who store up violence and robbery in their

palaces.' Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'An adversary *shall be* all around the land; He shall sap your strength from you, and your palaces shall be plundered.' Amos 3:9-11

'Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who *are* on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, "Bring *wine*, let us drink!" The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness: "Behold, the days shall come upon you When He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. You will go out *through* broken *walls*, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast into Harmon,"' Says the LORD. Amos 4:1-3

'Behold, I *am* against you,' says the LORD of hosts, 'I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall be heard no more.' Nahum 2:13

Hundreds more examples of this kind could be given.

What Scripture says regarding the behaviour of saints

The critical principle

He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike *are* an abomination to the LORD. Prov 17:15

He who says to the wicked, 'You *are* righteous,' Him the people will curse; nations will abhor him. But those who rebuke *the wicked* will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them. Prov 24:24-25

Thus it is clear that to support or justify wicked rulers is a sin – plain and simple. There is no blessing from God in justifying the wicked, including wicked rulers; but God blesses those who rebuke the wicked.

Rebuking evil and condemning wickedness is a normal part of righteous living

Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold *is* a wise rebuker to an obedient ear. Prov 25:12

Open rebuke *is* better than love carefully concealed. Prov 27:5

Let the proud be ashamed. Ps 119:78

Exposing and judging sin is a necessity of leaders and brethren

Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 2 Tim 4:2

Exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Titus 2:15

Condemning sin openly is a necessity in the church

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. Matt 18:15

Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. Gal 2:11-13

Those who are sinning [elders] rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. 1 Tim 5:20

Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. Titus 1:13

Exposing wickedness is a necessity in the Christian walk

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. Eph 5:11

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. Matt 18:15

Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. Lk 17:3

Condemning wickedness is a part of righteous social life

You shall surely rebuke your neighbour, and not bear sin because of him. Lev 19:17

Prayer life should include praying against wickedness and wicked people, including wicked rulers.

For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part *is* destruction; their throat *is* an open tomb; they flatter with their tongue. Pronounce them guilty, O God! Let them fall by their own counsels; Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against You. Ps 5:9-10

Let their table become a snare before them, And their well-being a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; and make their loins shake continually. Pour out Your indignation upon them, and let Your wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their dwelling place be desolate; Let no one live in their tents. For they persecute the *ones* You have struck, And talk of the grief of those You have wounded. Add iniquity to their iniquity, and let them not come into Your righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. Ps 69:22-28

For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones. ... Deal with them as *with* Midian, as *with* Sisera, as *with* Jabin at the Brook Kishon, who perished at En Dor, *Who* became *as* refuse on the earth. ... O my God, make them like the whirling dust, like the chaff before the wind! As the fire burns the woods, and as the flame sets the mountains on fire, so pursue them with Your tempest, and frighten them with Your storm. Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O LORD. Let them be confounded and dismayed forever; yes, let them be put to shame and perish, that they may know that You, whose name alone *is* the LORD, *are* the Most High over all the earth. Ps 83:2-18

Set a wicked man over him, and let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him be found guilty, And let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few, And let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, And his wife a widow. Let his children continually be vagabonds, and beg; Let them seek their bread also from their desolate places. Let the creditor seize all that he has, And let strangers plunder his labour. Let there be none to extend mercy to him, Nor let there be any to favour his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off, And in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD, And let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be continually before the LORD, That He may cut off the memory of them from the earth; Because he did not remember to show mercy, But persecuted the poor and needy man, That he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come to him; As he did not delight in blessing, so let it be far from him.

As he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment, So let it enter his body like water, And like oil into his bones. Let it be to him like the garment which covers him, And for a belt with which he girds himself continually. Let this be the LORD's reward to my accusers, And to those who speak evil against my person. Ps 109:6-20

Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God! Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men. For they speak against You wickedly; Your enemies take *Your name* in vain. Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies. Ps 139:19-22

My prayer *is* against the deeds of the wicked. Ps 141:5

Do good, O LORD, to *those who are* good, and to *those who are* upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them away with the workers of iniquity. Ps 125:4-5

God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, To this very day. And David says: 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always.' Rm 11:8-10

Praying for the poor and needy

LORD, who *is* like You, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him? Ps 35:10

Oh, do not let the oppressed return ashamed! Let the poor and needy praise Your name. Ps 74:21

Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; free *them* from the hand of the wicked. Ps 82:3-4

Our obligation to the cause of the poor and needy

Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy. Prov 31:9

Wickedness in government causes a necessary reaction in good people

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked *man* rules, the people groan. Prov 29:2

There is an evil I have seen under the sun, as an error proceeding from the ruler: Folly is set in great dignity. Eccles 10:5-6

The wicked prowl on every side, when vileness is exalted among the sons of men. Ps 12:8

Examples of prophets condemning the actions of rulers

Elijah

Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, '*Is that* you, O troubler of Israel?' And he answered, 'I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house *have*, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals.' 1 Kg 18:17-18

John the Baptist

Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put *him* in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her.' Matt 14:3-4

Jesus

On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, 'Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.' And He said to them, 'Go, tell that fox ...' Lk 13:31-32

Paul

Then Paul said to him, 'God will strike you, *you* whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?' Acts 23:3

Examples of Biblical castigation of the wicked

Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God *endures* continually. Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. You love evil more than good, Lying rather than speaking righteousness. Selah You love all devouring words, *You* deceitful tongue. God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of *your* dwelling place, And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah The righteous also shall see and fear, And shall laugh at him, *saying*, "Here is the man *who* did not make God his strength, But trusted in the abundance of his riches, *And* strengthened himself in his wickedness." Ps 52:1-7

Do you indeed speak righteousness, you silent ones? Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men? No, in heart you work wickedness; You weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth. The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent; *They are* like the deaf cobra *that* stops its ear, Which will not heed the voice of charmers, Charming ever so skilfully. Break their teeth in their mouth, O God! Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD! Let them flow away as waters *which* run continually; *When* he bends *his* bow, Let his arrows be as if cut in pieces. *Let them be* like a snail which melts away as it goes, *Like* a stillborn child of a woman, that they may not see the sun. Before your pots can feel *the burning* thorns, He shall take them away as with a whirlwind, As in His living and burning wrath. The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, So that men will say, "Surely *there is* a reward for the righteous; Surely He is God who judges in the earth." Ps 58:1-11

Examples of people condemning the wicked

The Levites

The Levites attained to the priesthood (instead of the firstborn) as a result of condemning idolatry. In fact they not only condemned their brethren but they killed them in an act of righteous judgment according to God's command.

Now when Moses saw that the people *were* unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to *their* shame among their enemies), then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, 'Whoever *is* on the LORD's side -- *come* to me.' And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. And he said to them, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.'" So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day. Ex 32:25-28

Moses

Then Moses was very angry, and said to the LORD, 'Do not respect their offering [Korah, Dathan and Abiram]. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them. ... 'if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD.' Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. So they and all those with them went down alive

into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly. Num 16:15, 30-33

Note: Moses' anger is justified by God because it was directed against wicked men.

Jesus

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' Matt 3:7

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.

Matt 11:21-24

Now when the Pharisees heard *it* they said, 'This *fellow* does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' ... [Jesus said] 'Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things?' Matt 12:24, 34

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged *to perform it*.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged *to perform it*.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Matt 23:13-19

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Matt 23:27-28

'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous ... Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: *some* of them you will kill and crucify, and *some* of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.' Matt 23:29-35

By any judgment, Jesus' words express anger directed at unrighteousness.

Historical examples of Christians taking control of the state in response to wickedness of the rulers

In certain cases, and under God's sovereign control, there were occasions where rulers so disobeyed God's law that the nation rose up to do something about it. This is a debatable course of action, but the guiding principle of these reformers was that everybody is subject to law. If the government fails to submit either to God's moral law or even the laws of the

country, then lesser rulers (magistrates in the Reformation) are obligated to resist the ruler and re-establish law under a different regime.

This happened many times in the course of the Reformation and if it hadn't, then the world would now be a very different place and we would all be under the despotic rule of Catholic imperialists. The Protestant church would never have existed. So, before you complain about this course of action, consider that if these men had not done this then you would not have been saved. God's plan of election included changing a government as a result of condemnation of a prior disobedient government.

Examples of this include:

The Glorious Revolution: whereby James II was forced to abdicate and Protestant William and Mary replaced him (Mary was Charles I's daughter, making the monarchy legal).

The Dutch Revolt: whereby the Protestant Low Countries rebelled against the harsh persecution of the King of Spain.

The English Civil War: where a legitimate Parliament rebelled against a despotic, corrupt king, and having defeated him, tried him for treason and executed him.

Schmalkaldic War: a defensive war between a confederacy (the Schmalkaldic League) of Protestant German princes who tried to ward off the far superior forces of the Holy Roman Emperor. Though they were defeated, political exigencies forced Charles V to give in to the religious demands and secure Protestantism in Germany.

The rebellion of the Swiss Cantons:

City-states, such as Geneva, decided through a democratic process to become Protestant. This meant rebelling against their Roman Catholic overlords, in this case the Duke of Savoy, and allying with a Swiss confederacy.

The Huguenot defensive wars:

The persecuted Huguenots felt obligated to forge a military resistance to the King of France's attacks. For a time they were in the ascendancy when Henry of Navarre became king, but eventually they were forced to flee the country or be obliterated (thousands died). The offshoot of this was the benefit accrued to England and Holland in ship-makers and tailors.

The resistance of Martin Luther:

Martin Luther's condemnation of indulgences was a political act as well as a religious one. Various legal constraints were placed upon him, excommunication (to be enforced by the ruler), governmental threats etc. but he resisted them all. His friendly ruler, Elector Frederick, placed himself in jeopardy by supporting and protecting Luther against his overlord, the Holy Roman Emperor.

The forced abdication of Mary Queen of Scots:

Mary was not only a mostly absent ruler (in France), nor just a Roman Catholic bent on eradicating Protestantism, but was also a conspiratorial (which is what led to her execution) wicked woman who even married the murderer of her husband. The mostly Protestant Scottish people eventually forced her abdication via a coalition of nobles, placing her son James VI on the Scottish throne.

Excuses for not obeying Scripture

I can't do anything about this, therefore I will not discuss it

This is an exceptionally poor excuse for not obeying God. We are not called to change anything in this world (except our behaviour and the hearts of those we convince of the truth) but we are called to be a testimony and to proclaim all the truth of God as it applies to the world. Every Christian is a proclaimer.

The fact that we cannot change our nation or fix the problems caused when evil is legislated for, does not alter the fact that we must condemn the iniquity of governments when they act for Satan and not God.

In face of evil we are either for it or against it. If we do not establish that our testimony is opposed to it, then we are, de facto, supporting it – at least in the eyes of observers.

God tells me not to judge anyone

This was considered and refuted in the introduction.

I am not political

Neither am I, nor do I support engaging in politics. What is necessary is godly obedience to God's word and that includes the condemnation of evil and the proclaiming of the truth.

All Christians are also subject citizens of their host country. As a believer (although we are not of this world) we have a certain responsibility as a citizen to hold rulers accountable. Some choose to express this by voting (which has become more and more pointless in recent decades as all the parties are equally corrupt, isolated and incompetent) but the more important measure is by the expression of your character so that people know where you stand. You are to be a weathervane that shows exactly what God thinks about any matter. People should evaluate you and by this learn what God thinks is righteous and what he thinks is wicked. Part of this will be a denunciation of evil.

I can't know if politicians are wicked, foolish or just incompetent therefore I cannot judge.

Of course you can! The Biblical principle laid down by Jesus himself is that we judge by a person's fruit. We are not called to know their hearts or all the circumstances of their decisions, but we view the objective fruit that is undeniable. If that fruit warrants condemnation then they stand condemned. For instance, if a government policy or legislation (whatever its purpose) actually serves to damage the poor, weak, and vulnerable, then that is bad fruit and stands condemned.

To fail to condemn them is actually a sin since we are called to only speak the truth. If a politician has done serious damage, such as oppress the poor and needy, then he stands condemned before God for disobeying his obligation as a ruler to obey God's law and protect the poor as a prime obligation. The believer's job is to represent God and condemn this sin so that the believer is seen to be on the side of righteousness. To fail to do this is a sin and a corruption of your testimony.

It is not my job to do this

Then whose job is it? Only Christians can express what the character of God is like; the world will not speak for righteousness (except in some isolated emotional cases). It is the job of Christians to plead the cause for the poor and needy.

Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy. Prov 31:9

God tells me to support even wicked rulers who are under his sovereign control

The text most often used to support this idea is:

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 1 Tim 2:1-2

What does this passage actually say?

- We are to pray for all sorts of men, and that includes kings. This was to correct the impulse to avoid praying for kings who opposed the church at that time. In the future, prayers would lead to the conversion of some kings (such as Edward VI). We do not know who is elect therefore we pray for all in our sphere. Even an enemy of the church (like Paul himself) could be saved.
- Thanks be made for the usefulness of all men. Thus even bad kings can have some uses, such as restraining social iniquity and enabling safe travel.
- The chief focus of praying for kings and authorities is that we have a quiet and safe life so that in a time of peace the Gospel can spread rapidly. History shows that in times of peace (such as Pax Victoriana) the Gospel spread much more rapidly. Under Queen Victoria not only did the British church expand but Britain filled the world with missionary endeavours. The same thing occurred under the Pax Romana.

This passage says nothing about supporting wicked rulers at all. Indeed, it could not since Scripture elsewhere repeatedly condemns wicked rulers.

The final antichristian kingdom

We cannot delve into the Scriptural exposition of this here, I will just have to take it that the reader understands the propositions.

The end period of the world is characterised by a totalitarian world government that is so evil that it is called the rule of 'the man of sin' (or Antichrist). This sets itself up against everything that God deems good and proposes that man himself is God (the meaning of the mark 666 in Revelation). In this period there is a great persecution of the church, called by Jesus, 'a tribulation'. In fact, a characteristic of the Antichrist is that he sets himself up as Christ himself (the Greek word 'anti' meaning 'in the place of'). As a result there are two dimensions to this evil kingdom, the political sphere of absolute despotism and a religious sphere where people worship the kingdom itself (whether centred in an actual man 'the beast', or whether considered as a corporate entity).

This is not the place to further expound the characteristics of this kingdom. The point is this: the kingdom arises by stealth in stages. There is not a point in history where the world was previously relatively righteous and 'Christian', but the next day is thoroughly wicked; no, over many years there is a gradual deterioration of righteousness and a slow acceptance of sin as good. There will come a precipitous point where a new global empire will be inaugurated, but there will have been decades, or centuries, of slowly preparing for it.

Now Christians would not wish, I hope, to support this evil world government in any way and I trust that even the most tolerant conservative folk would, in that day, denounce its wickedness. But what about the stages of deterioration that occur beforehand; do not these advances of legislated wickedness demand an equal denouncement from us? There is a real serious danger that some Christians can so have their heads in the sand that they end up supporting the Antichrist just because he represents elected government.

What we see before us today is the slow degeneration of every aspect of Biblical social order being destroyed systematically in preparation for the end. For instance, the legislation of Gay marriage is a fundamental article of an antichristian state. The government that legislates for this is complicit in furthering the kingdom of Antichrist. Surely this requires condemnation? Now this is but one facet out of hundreds that I could name. All these incursions of evil should be denounced by those who are wise and know their God - yet often we see that Christians are not only silent, but demand their more outspoken brethren to be silent also – with anger.

I, for one, will have no truck with the establishment of the antichristian end-time kingdom, (God keep me) and I will continue to denounce those preparations that are occurring in national governments today, especially the oppression of the poor, vulnerable, weak, sick, old, frail and needy. I submit that anything less is sin.

Caveat

Just in case there is confusion here: I am not supporting efforts to change the world, be they lobbying, protesting, petitioning or marching in the streets – which in fact is pointless and, inevitably, contrary to God’s sovereign will that society degenerates at the end. The Christian is concerned with his own testimony and seeking to be a true reflection of God’s will. In this sense he must denounce evil personally when expressing an opinion; but he is not active in trying to change society, other than by doing good to his neighbour.

The Christian testimony is that in the midst of a world that is filled with iniquity, which we condemn, Christians actively seek to do good to all that they can around them to shine as light in a dark world.

Conclusion

There is absolutely no doubt that the Bible teaches, in command and by example, that we are to condemn evil and iniquity. We must never be silent, or much worse, defend the iniquitous. Remember that a curse results for those who defend iniquity.

Thus any government that promotes policies which create poverty and worsens the lot of the poor and needy, even if this is by accident and not design, that government must be condemned as iniquitous and ungodly. The judgment of God will follow upon such a government.

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