

POLITICS

How should Christians react?

This is an area where believers can be extremely naïve. On the one hand there are people who simply believe that they have to support absolutely everything a government does; criticising a minister is unthinkable. Then there are others who see the government as part of an Antichrist power base, so criticism is endless; everything is part of a sinister plot overseen by the Illuminati. Needless to say both extremes are wrong, but exactly what is the godly man supposed to do in the face of modern politics?

Firstly, what do I mean by politics? The basic understanding of politics relates to the activities associated with the governance of a country. In this sense only a fool would say that he is not interested in politics and only the naïve could maintain that politics have no bearing on their life. Since a Christian is to love his neighbour (which is everyone within the sphere of his movements), the way a country is governed is of vital concern to him. That which damages his neighbour (even if government sponsored) must be condemned. Furthermore, leaders are to be prayed for and this requires an understanding of leaders' decisions and behaviour in order to pray aright. Praying for God to bless an evil man is clearly wrong; therefore, believers must acquaint themselves with what their leaders are up to. Also, governments frequently enact wicked laws and it is clear that a believer cannot support such political decisions.

The fact is, awkward and protracted as it is, the believer needs to understand what is going on in the governing of his country; especially since the Lord Jesus commanded us to watch and pray about events around us.

God commands all governors to rule righteously

That this is the clear teaching of scripture is obvious to all. Such texts as the following give some specific examples:

- It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, For a throne is established by righteousness. Righteous lips are the delight of kings, and they love him who speaks what is right. (Prov 16:12-13)
- Divination *is* on the lips of the king; His mouth must not transgress in judgment. (Prov 16:10)
- Mercy and truth preserve the king, and by lovingkindness he upholds his throne. (Prov 20:28)
- Take away the wicked from before the king, And his throne will be established in righteousness. (Prov 25:5)
- A ruler who lacks understanding *is* a great oppressor, *But* he who hates covetousness will prolong *his* days. (Prov 28:16)
- When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked *man* rules, the people groan. (Prov 29:2)

- Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish *in* the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him. (Ps 2:10-11)
- 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. (Isa 10:1-2)
- The wicked shall be turned into hell, And all the nations that forget God. Let the nations be judged in Your sight. Put them in fear, O LORD. (Ps 9:17-20).
- When they [the poor] are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow, he pours contempt on princes, and causes them to wander in the wilderness *where there is* no way. (Ps 107:39-40)
- For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the LORD (2 Chron 28:19).
- For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, And *those* nations shall be utterly ruined. (Isa 60:12)
- "I have cut off nations, their fortresses are devastated; I have made their streets desolate, with none passing by. Their cities are destroyed; *there is* no one, no inhabitant. I said, 'Surely you will fear Me, you will receive instruction' -- So that her dwelling would not be cut off, *despite* everything for which I punished her. But they rose early and corrupted all their deeds. Therefore wait for Me," says the LORD, "Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination *is* to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All my fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy." (Zeph 3:6-8;)

It is plain that the Lord commands kings and governors to rule with justice, love and righteousness. Those that fail to do this will reap judgment. However, this does not mean that there is the possibility of a righteous nation. Just as the Gospel demands repentance and faith, but none can do this since they are dead in sins and thus man needs a perfect saviour to gain righteousness by unmerited grace, so also God demands that nations rule righteously, but none can achieve this due to the inherent sin of the rulers. The fact that a perfect nation is impossible in this world does not excuse those nations that promote lawlessness and sin. God demands justice, but there is forgiveness and mercy for rulers that fail and turn to him for salvation.

Even nations that have been blessed with Christian rulers have had troubled times, but the reign of those believers brought significant good to their lands. One can think of Edward VI, Alfred the Great, Oliver Cromwell, William IV in England, Wenceslas of Bavaria, Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden or Abraham Kuyper, Prime Minister in the Netherlands.

Perfect rule is impossible, but God demands that rulers govern by his ordinances. What then do we do? Can we ignore the sins of rulers, or should we point them out? Should we excuse them since they are bound to fail, or should we criticise? At what point do we condemn a government for its wickedness?

Can Christians ever criticise or condemn government actions?

Clearly Christians must give to Caesar his due, and this entails respect as well as taxes; but believers must never get into a situation where they condone evil or support hurtful policies. There is a higher law than civil obedience, and that is to obey God when his law contradicts man's (Acts 5:29).

Scripture history shows us that God frequently condemned human governments for their sin. Indeed, much of the writing prophets' activity was taken up with the condemnation of political leaders. Hardly any of the nations of the Near East escaped God's judgment threatened by his prophets. The following table is merely a brief snapshot of nations condemned; the actual amount of space given to this matter is enormous. God is vitally concerned about the governance of nations and will condemn those who rule unrighteously (which is all of them).

Isaiah	Assyria 10:5, Babylon 13:1, Damascus 17:1, Edom 21:11, Egypt 19:1, Moab 15:1, Philistia 14:29, Tyre 23:1
Jeremiah	Egypt 46:1, Philistia 47:1, Moab 48:1, Ammon 49:1, Edom 49:7, Damascus 49:23, Babylon 50:1
Ezekiel	Ammon 25:1, Edom 25:12, Egypt 29:11, Moab 25:8, Philistia 25:15, Tyre 26:1
Amos	Ammon 1:13, Damascus 1:3, Edom 1:11, Moab 2:1, Philistia 1:6, Tyre 1:9
Obadiah	Edom 1:1
Habakkuk	Babylon 2:6
Malachi	Edom 1:4
Nahum	Nineveh (Assyria) 1:1

Then there is the example of actual judgments on nations, either supernatural or ordinary. The ante-deluvian world was destroyed for its sins, with the exception of Noah's family of eight. Sodom and Gomorrah were burned with heavenly fire for their sins. Egypt was punished for its slavery of Israel; the glory of Egyptian civilisation never recovered from God's judgment. Assyria and Babylon, though used by God for chastisement of his people, were themselves destroyed for their sins. We could go on. The point is that a nation's evil sometimes results in the intervention of God in judgment. Even if this does not happen in time, the Lord repeatedly threatens the final verdict when sins will be paid for at the last assize on the Day of Judgment after the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Clearly Christians cannot support or condone that which God declares to be evil.

Also, the lord frequently condemns specific leaders for the evil of their policies:

Hear now, O heads of Jacob, and you rulers of the house of Israel: *is it* not for you to know justice? You who hate good and love evil; who strip the skin from my people, and the flesh from their bones. ... Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity: her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, 'Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us.' Therefore because of you Zion shall be ploughed *like* a field, Jerusalem shall

become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest. (Micah 3:1-2, 9-12)

And God condemns, as a general principle, those who rule badly.

Like a roaring lion and a charging bear *is* a wicked ruler over poor people. A ruler who lacks understanding *is* a great oppressor, *But* he who hates covetousness will prolong *his* days. (Prov 28:15-16)

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? And where will you leave your glory? Without me they shall bow down among the prisoners, and they shall fall among the slain. (Isa 10:1-4)

In the course of his condemnation, the Lord sometimes identifies the culprits, commands a prophet to condemn it and then takes immediate temporal judgement against the person all at the same time:

1 Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the East Gate of the LORD's house, which faces eastward; and there at the door of the gate were twenty-five men, among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.

2 And He said to me: "Son of man, these *are* the men who devise iniquity and give wicked counsel in this city ...

4 "Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man!"

5 Then the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said to me, "Speak! 'Thus says the LORD: "Thus you have said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind.

6 "You have multiplied your slain in this city, and you have filled its streets with the slain."

7 'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Your slain whom you have laid in its midst, they *are* the meat, and this *city is* the caldron; but I shall bring you out of the midst of it.

8 "You have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you," says the Lord GOD.

9 "And I will bring you out of its midst, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and execute judgments on you.

10 "You shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at the border of Israel. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD.

11 "This *city* shall not be your caldron, nor shall you be the meat in its midst. I will judge you at the border of Israel.

12 "And you shall know that I *am* the LORD; for you have not walked in My statutes nor executed My judgments, but have done according to the customs of the Gentiles which *are* all around you." ' "

13 Now it happened, while I was prophesying, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. (Ezek 11:1-2, 4-13)

The normal result of the prophet's obedience to the word of the Lord is persecution from the authorities that he exposes and condemns; but sadly, religious leaders and even other Christians will join in this opposition to God's proclaimed word. In the case of Amos, the

country was at ease and the land was prosperous, but this prosperity had led to social corruption and religious idolatry. God raised up a man who was an ordinary farmer, not educated, not of a priestly family, just a simple herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees. He fearlessly condemned the king and the social evils that prevailed as a result of the king's policies. In return, the religious establishment condemned Amos whom they accused of conspiracy:

Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, 'Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words.' (Amos 7:10)

An unjust man *is* an abomination to the righteous, and *he who is* upright in the way *is* an abomination to the wicked. (Prov 29:27)

So what have we learned so far?

- As a general principle, God hates wicked rulers and commands that men should govern their land in righteousness according to his principles of justice.
- God's word condemns specific wicked human governments.
- Bad rulers will certainly be judged at the last judgment, but it seems that there is often a measure of divine retribution meted out in this world.
- The Lord often sends a true believer to be his mouthpiece against bad governments and specific men are named and shamed.
- Condemning social evil will result in persecution. Anyone who stands in the gap to declare the Lord's word against unrighteousness will be perceived as a threat by spiritual and worldly powers.
- Often, superficial religious leaders will also be threatened (since their lack of true religious backbone will also be exposed to all) and these will oppose the true prophet.

First conclusion

It is not only normal and righteous to condemn wickedness in high places, God expects genuine believers to speak out with a prophetic voice against evil policies. In doing so they represent the God who commands rulers to act righteously. It is a prophetic activity to speak the truth against injustice and social evil.

Eph 5:11-13

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose (reprove)¹ *them*. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed (reproved) are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

This is a clear command from the apostle, Christians are to expose and admonish works of darkness that they come into contact with. Under no circumstances must they share in such works. Believers do not sit in a corner and ignore what is going on around them, they have an obligation to reprove evil. If a government indulges in evil works, Christians are obliged to denounce them as darkness.

¹ *Expose* means, to severely reprehend, convict, refute, find fault with, bring to light, bring shame upon, admonish, reprove, call to account.

Second conclusion

Christians are directly commanded to expose and reprove evil. If the evil comes from the government or the Town Council, it makes no difference, evil must be contended with and not condoned. This denunciation is primarily to warn the saints.

Is doing nothing an option for believers in the face of social injustice?

It is well said that for evil to flourish, it simply needs good men to do nothing.² This is certainly what happened in Germany in the 1930's. Hitler was able to accrue more and more power, and pass worse and worse totalitarian legislation because the people that knew better did nothing. The intellectuals largely failed through fear when the few that withstood the degeneration of their nation were harshly treated.

Nations develop and prosper under God with the active co-operation of the righteous believers; the involvement of Christians through prayer and their normal duties enhance the status of the nation. However, when believers fail to be wise and wicked people get the upper hand in their propaganda, social stability is overthrown:

When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices; and when the wicked perish, *there is* jubilation. By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked. (Prov 11:10-11)

When the righteous rejoice, *there is* great glory; but when the wicked arise, men hide themselves. (Prov 28:12)

When the voice of evil thunders forth in the land, it is the duty of Christians to withstand it in principle; not by illegal activity or civil disobedience but by condemning what is unrighteous. The very worst thing a Christian can do in these circumstances is to condone, or even give tacit support, to evil policies:

Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep the law contend with them. Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the LORD understand all. (Prov 28:4-5)

The believer must contend with those who promote policies that offend the law of God. To praise a government that is introducing wicked laws is a terrible evil in the sight of God.

The real issue – sin!

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked *man* rules, the people groan. The king establishes the land by justice, but he who receives bribes overthrows it. (Prov 29:2,4)

What people must understand is that good governments are not made by following correct rules of social structuring, economic theories, political bias and so on; good government is a matter of righteousness. The nation that is founded upon the general principles of God's law will prosper – simple as that.

Whatever your thoughts about Oliver Cromwell, and whatever his faults, all accept that he at least tried to rule under his understanding of the guidance of God's word. In his day we

² Attributed to Burke, in various forms, but not found in his writings.

had the proper beginnings of parliamentary government, a relative national peace after a bloody civil war (no small feat in itself), enactment of godly laws and England became a nation feared by her enemies due to the successes of her military enterprises. No human ruler will be perfect due to the corruption of our sinful nature and Cromwell made some serious mistakes – but the difference between the dissipation, intrigue, hubris, blasphemy, arrogance and unwise decisions characterised by the reigns of the latter Stuarts is clear to any casual reader of history.

The more a governing body enacts laws or encourages society in a direction away from the word of God, the more that society will fragment and fall apart. For every single law passed which contradicts God's will, there is a corresponding negative effect in society. There is always a price to be paid; we sow a wind to reap a whirlwind.

Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with you? (Ps 94:20)

Christians who support governments when they enact evil laws are in danger of supporting the work of the devil in his evil plans for world domination. For instance, any law that encourages the promotion of homosexuality is not an aid to toleration but is flagrant opposition to the clear command of God which condemns this sexual deviation. It is noteworthy that successful, ancient societies which later encouraged homosexual activity gradually saw their glory diminish (such as Greece).

When a government amends laws, or passes several new ones that legalise various aspects of homosexuality, that government is unrighteous and cannot be supported by Christians. As I write, the current Labour government has: ended the ban on gays in the forces; lowered the age of gay consent; fought to scrap clause 28; let gay couples adopt; scrapped laws against 'cottaging' in public toilets; scrapped the married couples tax allowance and has sanctioned gay marriage. All this while: schools are in meltdown and head-teachers cannot even afford teachers or fire safety measures for buildings, the roads are grid-locked, trains are in chaos, hospitals are falling apart, taxes increasing at high levels, the defence budgets have been savagely cut, immoral wars have been fought – we could go on. Crises abound that have no solution, however, several laws are brought in to encourage homosexuality.

Another clear sin is lying and the Lord condemns falsehood throughout his word. There was a time in England that any government minister caught in the act of lying would be required to resign immediately. This current Labour government has made an art form out of lying. There are so many cases of officials lying and twisting the truth that whole books could be written about it (some are being written).³ Several ex-cabinet ministers have openly criticised the PM for overseeing a culture of spin and falsehoods. One morning in August 2003, both No 10 and the Deputy PM said that a certain statement regarding the deceased weapons inspector Dr David Kelly had not been made. By the afternoon they were forced to admit that this statement had indeed been made by the PM's chief spokesman, but only as a result of journalistic pressure.

This is an evil government, proved to be so on these matters, let alone many other social injustices. A government which actively champions homosexuality and is proven many

³ For instance see Peter Osborne, *The Rise of Political Lying*, (Free Press) which appeared soon after this paper was written.

times over to lie is deemed wicked by the Bible. Christians that support such a government cannot be walking in wisdom.

So what do we do in practice?

Do we act like the world and join protest marches, demonstrations, complain to newspapers, write multiple letters, appear in the media or initiate acts of civil disobedience? Absolutely not. The believer is not of this world and the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly. Make no mistake, this is a war and the actual social problems on the ground are parts of a demonic strategy that the church is called to confront. **But the church does not act like the world.** The urge to protest in fleshly ways is a devilish temptation to distract believers from doing the correct and more powerful things.

Consider this, the most crucial thing in this context is to understand the will of God. We are living in the end of the times and God has spoken clearly about what will transpire. Society will degenerate, morals will dissipate, the church will be persecuted and a global power will arise that concentrates evil in a legal form.⁴ If God is allowing Satan to be unrestrained and letting nations fall deeper into sin and godlessness as part of his end-time plan, protesting against this degeneration will actually be working against God's will. It is sin to engage in social demonstrations against that which God is causing; we could find ourselves protesting against God.

Amos says: shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done *it*? (Amos 3:6, KJV) Here the prophet warns that God will punish the nation for its sins (Amos 3:2).⁵ The evil confronting society is caused by God in his purposes. To complain about that evil or protest it would be to rail against God. If society is falling apart in sin, it has been judged by God. God causes this degeneration as a punishment. Consider the following:

- I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these *things*. (Isa 45:7)
- The LORD has done what He purposed; He has fulfilled His word which He commanded in days of old. He has thrown down and has not pitied, and He has caused an enemy to rejoice over you; He has exalted the horn of your adversaries. (Lam 2:17)
- Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil come? (Lam 3:38, RSV)

What is the believer's action in the face of social calamity? Jeremiah tells us:

It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD... Let him sit alone and keep silent, because God has laid it on him ... For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. (Lam 3:26-32)

The believer's job is to submit to God's hand in the society he finds himself in. Just as we cannot rise up in rebellion to an unjust government, neither do we use human means of protestation. However, we do not condone unrighteous government and we act as responsible citizens in condemning that evil. We speak the truth but do not take civil action.

⁴ See Matt 24; 2 Thess 2; 1 Tim 4; Rev 13 & 17.

⁵ Amos himself condemned social evil caused by the king. However, bear in mind that Israel was a unique theocratic nation and that Amos was raised up by God to condemn the sinful actions of the person ruling God's people under God. Prophetic denunciations of society are not a template for civil mobilisation.

The early church was faced with much they could have protested about.

- In general women were treated shabbily and the rabbis equated women with dogs; in fact it was the church that elevated the position of women to be equal with men under the Gospel.
- Slavery was accepted as the norm and commonplace; one in five people in Rome were slaves. A proposal in the senate that slaves be forced to wear distinctive dress was defeated due to the fear that slaves would realise how numerous they were.⁶ Slavery led to cruelty and sexual licence in society. Many believers were slaves, yet the apostles never told them to protest about this inequality; in fact they told slaves to work hard for their masters and only be released if the opportunity became available.
- Roman citizenship for the minority led to discrimination in society; only citizens could vote and then only in Rome.
- Prostitution, fertility rites and religious orgies were common, especially in the Near East. It is said that there were 1,000 sacred prostitutes at the temple of Aphrodite at Corinth.⁷ Homosexuality was rife, especially in Greek areas.
- Roman punishments were brutal and inhuman. These included scourging, crucifixion, gladiatorial contests, exposure to (and rape by) wild beasts, or slavery in mines.
- In the first century Rome began to develop the idea of Emperor worship. Augustus had encouraged this eastern idea about 12 BC and it developed throughout the next 100 years. This was a direct confrontation to the church and in later years led to many martyrdoms.

The apostles never directed believers to protest about any of these things. Indeed, the Lord himself commanded us to give Caesar the honour due to him as a God-appointed king. No, ours is not the way of protests. Under no circumstances can we become rebels.

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. (Phil 2:14-15)

So what do we do?

- Firstly, we must understand what our calling is. We are not called to change the world, despite the many songs and books that tell us we are. This world is under judgment and is degenerating according to God's righteous judgment. At the end the devil is loosed for a little while to bring about the culmination of man's sin in an unrighteous world government submitted to Satan. The point at the end is that sin and unrighteousness is legalised and accepted; this process has begun already. We have no responsibility to try to improve society. Our task is to glorify God, edify our brethren and preach the Gospel to save people out of this world. The world we are going to enjoy is in the glory.
- We must also understand that God tells us we are pilgrims and sojourners in this world. We act as if we have no citizenship or lasting possession here. We have a loose hold on this world because our citizenship is in heaven. Our job is to snatch people out of this world, not make it a better place to live.
- We must make sure that we are informed. We must see behind the news that the media spins (much that is government controlled, especially in the US) and see the truth about what is going on. Various Christian ministries can help form this view (such as

⁶ Seneca; *De Clementia*, 1.24.1.

⁷ Strabo; 8.6.20-21.

Diakrisis or *Take Heed Ministries*). Some secular news sites are also very helpful (such as *Truthout* or *Alternet*).

- Then we must pray. We must pray for ourselves that we may have wisdom about how to behave; we should pray for national leaders as God leads; we should pray for peace so that the Gospel may be unfettered and we must pray for those suffering that God may have mercy and use this to promote the Gospel.
- We should align ourselves, and our church, against that which is evil and be clear about it. For instance all believers should clearly be against the Iraq war which is not only illegal under UN treaty but was promoted by blatant lies for reasons of imperial control, oil supply and profiteering. Some of us wrote against this before the event, warning about what would happen, and yet suffered for doing so (from believers).
- We should also endeavour to inform those in our sphere of influence what the truth is about social and political situations. It is our duty to educate those we care about. This can sometimes be a difficult matter.
- Some people may be called to develop this further and publish information on certain matters, but this is for the few.
- We must vote with great care, seeking to base our decision on the truth and not false promises, family loyalty to a party, intellectual premises or anything else. Under no circumstances should we support a decent local individual who is part of a party that is promoting evil, neither should we vote tactically.
- We should act within the bounds of being a good citizen. If the opportunity arises to confront an individual politician, as a good citizen do it. As a good citizen we can complain about specific matters that directly affect our family; such as complaining about negligent treatment in a poor hospital starved of funds.
- Finally, we must seek wisdom for how we act so that all our behaviour is godly and circumspect. If we are to turn the other cheek against evil directed at us, how can we become belligerent at more general social evil around us?

We cannot ignore politics but we must not become political activists - unless that is a job that God has specifically called you to in order to serve society (perhaps a very few are called to be politicians). We are not to use the tools of the flesh to fight a spiritual war. This means we do not need to form pressure groups, lobby, organise demonstrations, march, protest, start letter campaigns, advertise, start debating groups or any form of civil disobedience. The weapons of our warfare are primarily: truth, God's word, the Gospel, righteousness, faith and prayer. If more Christians used these weapons in the first instance, society may be a different place.

Politics is a world where the wiles of the devil hold sway. The Christian puts on the armour of God to withstand these wiles. We withstand evil in the Spirit. We do not react against it in the flesh.

Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of

the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. (Eph 6:11-18)

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds. (2 Cor 10:4)

Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version*, unless stated otherwise.
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