

REDEEMING THE TIME

“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16).

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IS THERE SUCH A THING AS

A JUST WAR?

BY BRAD K. GSELL

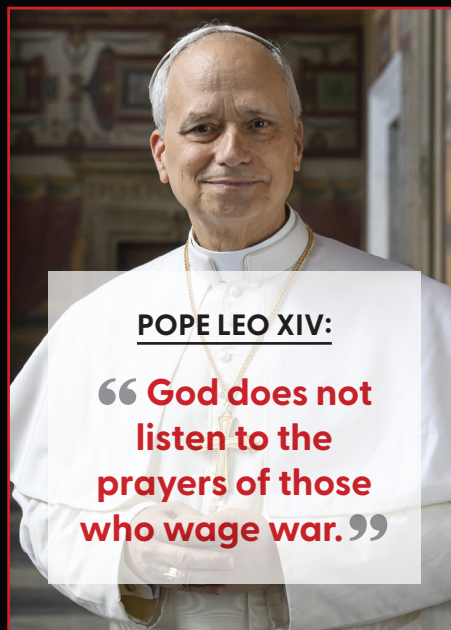
THE RECENT CONTROVERSY INVOLVING POPE LEO XIV AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNITED STATES concerning the war in Iran has engendered a multitude of news stories, and an explosion of ill-informed – yet all too certain – opinions on social media platforms.

This article is not aimed at defending or criticizing any specifics of the present conflict. Rather, it is important for Christians to move beyond shallow sloganeering and to examine exactly what the Bible teaches concerning war, and how this has been articulated throughout church history.

“Blessed are the peacemakers”

“Blessed are the peacemakers” is Christ’s teaching to us in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:9). This lesson comes from “the Prince of Peace”

Continued on page 10



POPE LEO XIV:

“ God does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war.”

THE HAND OF

God

AND THE HANDS OF

Men

BY ROBERT W. ANDERSON

Every regular reader of the Bible, I am confident, is impressed by certain expressions in it. Some that have caught my attention are those that speak of the “hand of God,” and also the “hands of men” in doing both good and evil. We understand that God does not have physical hands, but the term is used to make his actions more real to us. The “hand” really stands for the actions of the whole being — mind, will and emotions — of either God or man.

Among the many references to the “hand,” I have been struck by the accounts of Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah, which I would like to bring to your notice.

In chronological order:

- Esther comes first, some time after 486 BC, when Xerxes became King of Persia.
- Ezra, the priest, comes next about 458 BC, when, during the reign of Artaxerxes, he left Babylon to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple for the worship of God. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, had burned Solomon’s temple in 586 B.C.
- Then came Nehemiah, who was Artaxerxes’ cupbearer in the palace of Shushan, the winter capital of the Persian empire. His part begins around 445 B.C.

These three well-known names belong to the period called The Restoration, when

Continued on page 14

Music FOR THE Glory of God

BY FERNANDO OSSES



This message was presented at a conference of the Confederation of Evangelical Fundamental Churches of Chile, May 9, 2025, at the First Independent Methodist Church of Santiago, Chile. It has been edited slightly, with the author's permission.

PRINCIPLE: God has proscribed for us to worship Him in the manner that He Himself established.

APPLICATION: Let us worship God with holy music for His exclusive honor and glory.

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

Introduction:

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 1, asks us concerning the chief end of man. The answer given is: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.” Having a clear purpose in life is essential to attaining true peace and happiness. Therefore, the believer must always remember that his highest purpose in this life is to worship God, his Creator and Savior.

However, when it comes to *how* we should worship Him, many controversies arise. There are countless forms of worship in the world. In fact, every human being worships something. It is a natural inclination of the heart. This

leads us to an important truth: not all worship is pleasing to God. Even that which is offered in His name may not conform to His will.

We see with concern how many Christians share on social media various styles of music and practices that, far from honoring God, contradict Him. Scripture warns us about this. Titus 1:16 says: “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

True worship does not only acknowledge God with the lips but is manifested in a life that is consistent, obedient, and in accordance with His Word.

1. Worship

One definition of worship is for someone to render homage or pay respect, honor, or love to someone. In Hebrew, the word also implies bowing or prostrating oneself. According to the Bible, worship is giving honor to God for who He is, what He does, or what He says, through words, actions, and attitudes.

The worship of every believer can be practiced in private and public forms:

- **Private Worship:** This is practiced individually or within the family and includes personal prayer, reading and meditating on Scripture, private hymns or songs, and pious devotion.
- **Public Worship:** This is practiced together with the congregation. Bishop J.C. Ryle identifies seven forms of public or congregational worship:
 - * Sunday as a day dedicated exclusively to Christian service;
 - * A pastor or teacher to guide public worship;
 - * Public reading of the Bible;
 - * Preaching of the Word;
 - * Collective prayer;
 - * Congregational singing;
 - * Participation in the sacraments (baptism and the Lord’s Supper).

Chapter 21 of the Westminster Confession of Faith is entitled: “Of Re-



Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!



ligious Worship and the Sabbath Day.” It reminds us that worship must be regulated solely by God’s Word, not by our personal opinions or tastes: “But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.”

Worshipping God is not only the most important act a human can perform on earth, but it is also the main activity we will carry out in heaven along with the angels. Revelation 5:8-14 tells us:

8“*And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. 11And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as*

are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshiped him that liveth for ever and ever.”

From the beginning, God established worship through bloody sacrifices, as seen with Adam and Eve, and later with Abel, who offered an acceptable sacrifice by faith. However, humanity, influenced by Satan’s deception, began to modify worship according to personal preferences, as Cain did. Over time, this deviation led to worship based on images, rituals, and human traditions, moving away from worship “in spirit and in truth.”

Although God established temporary ceremonies under the Law to guide His people toward Christ, many confused these rites with the ultimate purpose. Throughout the Old Testament, the pattern of replacing true worship with external forms is repeated. But, Jesus, in His dialogue with the Samaritan woman, reaffirms that God seeks to be worshiped “in spirit and in truth.” This demonstrates that God has always had a clear model for how He expects to be worshiped.

2. Worship that God has established must be offered “in spirit and in truth”

Christ came to teach us that true worship must be directed to the Father, “in spirit and in truth.” Altars, sacrifices, and rituals are no longer necessary. All have been replaced by genuine worship

that is not based on external forms, but on a sincere heart seeking God.

However, due to our fallen nature, it is more difficult to worship God “in spirit” than through religious forms. We tend to seek rites and ceremonies, thinking that through them we come closer to God. Many believers may try to worship “in spirit,” organizing their prayers and singing praises in a majestic way; but, if there is no true repentance in their hearts, that worship is not “in truth.”

The Lord seeks worship that is not only spiritual but also true and sincere — not as an obligation, but because He sees the heart. Worship in truth involves living in obedience to His commandments and conducting our lives according to the gospel of Christ.

Not all worship is acceptable to Him, and throughout Scripture, we find examples of worship He rejected. In Isaiah 1:12-14, God rebukes His people for offering empty sacrifices and rituals that did not please Him:

12“*When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? 13Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. 14Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.”*

Three more examples of worship rejected by God are:

- **Cain’s Worship:** In Genesis 4:2-7, Cain offered produce from the ground, but God did not accept his sacrifice,

Continued on page 4



Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;



MUSIC FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Continued from page 3

because it did not follow what He had established. Abel, however, offering the best of his sheep, was favored by God. This shows that worship must follow divine instructions.

- **Jeroboam's Worship:** In 1 Kings 12:28-30, Jeroboam, king of Israel, made two golden calves for the people to worship, claiming they were the gods which brought them out of Egypt. God did not approve of this form of worship, as it was not to be performed with images or human will, but according to His command.
- **Nadab and Abihu's Worship:** In Leviticus 10:1-2, Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered "strange fire" that God had not commanded, and they were punished with death. Their attempt to innovate in worship was severely rejected. This highlights the importance of worshiping God in the manner He has established.

Finally, Elijah's example in 1 Kings 19:11-13 shows that we must not be deceived by outward forms. Elijah experienced powerful natural phenomena such as wind, earthquakes, and fire, but God was not in any of these. It was in the gentle whisper that Elijah heard God's voice. This reminds us that in the simplicity of Christ, true worship is found far from the appearance of great displays.

3. Worship through music

Music is one of the most recognized and important forms of worship-

ing God. The Book of Psalms is one of the longest books in the Bible.

Worshiping God through music must follow the same principles as other forms of worship:

- **Colossians 3:16:** "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
- **Ephesians 5:19-20:** "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...."
- **1 Corinthians 14:26:** "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."

Why is music important to God? According to three Old Testament verses, God is our Strength, our Song, and our Salvation. When He mentions the word Song, it refers to the Hebrew word *zimir*, whose root means instrumental music or the sound of music (*Strong's Concordance*, 2173 and 2176). These three verses are Exodus 15:2, Psalm 118:14, and Isaiah 12:2 — each representing one of the three sections of the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, the music we use in worship has supreme importance to God.

We should consider some principles for musical worship. I invite you to consider three fundamental principles of worship, which apply especially to singing:

a. "In Spirit and in Truth"

- Worship "in Spirit" means that **God is Spirit**. He is not limited to any physical location — not to Mount Gerizim, which the Samaritan woman considered the place of worship, nor to Jerusalem, Mount Moriah, or current temples or churches. God is Spirit and is everywhere. We cannot worship Him only in the church. We must worship Him at home, at work, in schools, universities, and even on social media.
- Worship in Spirit also implies having **a personal relationship with God**. When Jesus says the Father seeks such worshipers, it refers to a filial relationship — these worshipers are children of God, born of the Spirit, the saved. Many people worship, but it is not worship in Spirit because they are not regenerated. The Samaritan woman worshiped at Gerizim, but after her new birth, she worshiped in Spirit.
- **Worship "in Truth":** Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Jesus had said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Worship through music is not merely following rhythm or melody; it is worshiping while meditating on the cross of Christ. Our minds must be engaged.
- Worship in truth also **requires understanding**. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:15-16: 15 "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. 16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?"



Holy, Holy, Holy, merciful and mighty!



b. With Fear and Reverence

The following passages teach the proper attitude for worship:

- **Isaiah 6:** The prophet, upon seeing the holiness of God, cried, “Woe is me! for I am undone.” God then touched him so he would not die. Only after that could he worship God through service: “Here am I; send me.”
- **Luke 5:8:** Simon Peter, realizing Jesus’ power, fell to his knees and said, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Often we approach God in worship carelessly, full of sin and without reverence.
- **Hebrews 12:18-25:** Moses was terrified and trembling at Mount Sinai. How much more should we approach God through Christ with fear and reverence? God is a consuming fire (verses 28-29). True worship comes from those who know Him and fear Him.

c. With Responsibility

In Israel, a person could:

- Serve as a soldier at age 20 (Numbers 1:3);
- Serve in the priesthood at age 25 (Numbers 8:24);
- Minister as a priest at age 30 (Numbers 4:3).

Why? Because worship was a priority and required the highest level of maturity. It was the greatest responsibility.

Next, we will see how these principles are applied specifically in musical worship.

4. Music for the glory of God

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

One of the *solas* of the sixteenth century Reformation was: *Soli Deo Gloria* — all glory to God alone. Do we believe this? Is all glory truly for God, or can we claim some for ourselves?

In Isaiah 42:8, we read: “I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” Again, in Isaiah 48:11: “... for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.”

Thus, it is a biblical principle that all glory belongs to God. This principle applies to all things, especially worship, and more specifically to praise and music. Understanding, believing, and practicing this principle protects us from serious dangers, such as false worship, which has caused and continues to cause harm in the earthly church.

Music should be an extension of genuine worship, not merely entertainment. Christians must examine their motives when choosing what music to listen to or use in the church. We must find balance between form (musical style) and content (lyrics). Both should work together to convey a message that glorifies God.

If we want to worship God through music for His glory, we should consider the following aspects:

a. Music as a means of conveying a message

“And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him” (1 Samuel 16:23). Music conveys a message regardless of lyrics.

When Saul was tormented by the spirit, David’s music, whether by playing or singing, brought relief.

Music, as a language, has three main elements:

- **Melody:** The main line or focus of the music; the “soul” of music. In a Christian context, it should reflect order and beauty.
- **Harmony:** Supports the melody and is considered the “body” of music. It creates depth and richness, balanced with the melody.
- **Rhythm:** The driving force, compared to the “soul” of the body. If rhythm dominates melody, music loses balance and can become inappropriate.

Balance between melody, harmony, and rhythm is crucial. Healthy music is that where melody leads, supported by harmony, and followed by rhythm.

The structure of music mirrors God’s design in the universe and humanity. Just as God created the human body in harmony, music should reflect the same order and purpose.

How can we discern appropriate music? Ask these questions:

- **Does the music reflect order and beauty?**
- **Does the message align with Christian values?**
- **Does it inspire holy emotions and focus on God?**

Even scientific studies confirm music’s effect on people in various ways. Here are just a few examples:

- **Music and Aggression:** Exposure to violent music can increase aggression (*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1997).

Continued on page 6



God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity.



MUSIC FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Continued from page 5

- **Rhythms and Physiological Effects:** Fast or intense rhythms can raise heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol, inducing stress (*Frontiers in Psychology*, 2015).
- **Music and Decision-Making:** Background music can influence choices; cheerful music encourages optimism, melancholic music fosters reflection (University of Groningen, 2011).
- **Emotional and Psychological Effects:** Some genres correlate with rebellious attitudes, while others can be cathartic (*Psychology of Music*, 2016).
- **Music and Antisocial Behavior:** Frequent exposure to music with violent, sexual, or drug content correlates with risky behaviors in adolescents (*Journal of Adolescence*, 2003).

Music is not neutral. Christians must reflect on what music we listen to, play, or sing. Philippians 4:8 tells us: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

Music alone communicates a message (1 Corinthians 14:7-8) and influences the body, mind, and spirit. Appropriate music should nurture all three in a balanced way.

b. Music is Moral

Music has inherent moral components. It is never neutral. It can be good

or bad depending on structure, intention, and effect. Roger Scruton, an English philosopher, concluded that music has significant moral power: it can educate and ennoble or degrade and corrupt ethical sensitivity.

Moral considerations concerning music:

- **Moral character:** All music conveys moral meaning. Melody, rhythm, and harmony communicate values. Christian music must align with biblical principles.
 - **Biblical principles to evaluate music:**
 - * **Does it glorify God?:** (1 Corinthians 10:31);
 - * **Is it distinct from the world?:** (Romans 12:2);
 - * **Does it spiritually edify or merely satisfy desires?:** (1 Corinthians 14:26);
 - * **Is it pure and worthy?:** (Philippians 4:8).
 - **Cultural influence:** Contemporary Christian music often has secular roots. Christians must exercise caution, even if the lyrics are spiritual.
 - **Impact on worship:** Music should direct attention to God, not personal emotions or entertainment. Reverence is essential.
 - **Responsibility of leaders:** Pastors and worship leaders must model and promote music that glorifies God, educating congregations on its impact.
- Because music is moral, it shapes behavior and attitudes, for good or bad.

c. Music in worship is a battle

Music in worship is a crucial subject requiring discernment. We must make conscious choices, and not be carried away by sound.

The right music strengthens our relationship with God and our spiritual life. During the compilation of a new hymnal for the Fundamental Biblical Presbyterian Church of Chile, we chose to adjust the chorus of a traditional hymn whose ambiguous lyrics risked doctrinal confusion, prioritizing correct doctrine over personal preference.

Music in worship is a powerful tool, but worship is not emotional ecstasy. Its purpose is to honor God. Music must lead our focus to Him, not personal feelings.

Music also impacts reverence. Styles that suggest informality, irreverence, or sensuality are inappropriate, whether contemporary or traditional, if not carefully selected.

Proverbs warns against seductive speech:

- “For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil” (Proverbs 5:3).
- “To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman” (Proverbs 6:24).
- “With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him” (Proverbs 7:21).

The same principle applies to music: sensuality in singing distracts from true worship.

Music also teaches in worship. Hymns convey doctrine and strengthen faith. Lyrics, style, and harmony must align with biblical truth.

Finally, music in worship is a spiritual sacrifice. True worship demands humility, reverence, and conscious effort.

- “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psalm 29:2).
- “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).
- “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24).
- “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Music in worship is more than accompaniment. It is a conscious, reverent act centered on God and His glory.

5. Music in worship has a purpose

In Colossians 3:16, we find the key to choosing music that pleases God.

a. “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly”

Worship has both a vertical and horizontal element. Paul exhorts us that when we worship in the congregation or among the brethren, it is the Word of Christ that should dwell permanently among us. We could fall into the error of replacing this Word with worldly sayings or vain philosophies according to our tastes. Today, in many churches, psychological or emotional advice, personal opinions, and experiences often dominate, sometimes becoming the focus in pseudo-Christian singing.

The text begins with the Word of Christ and then associates it with “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.” Therefore, congregational singing must be centered on the Word of Christ. Our singing must be grounded in the foundation of Scripture: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20).

This Word must dwell richly in us. What abounds in our singing? Philoso-

phies, personal experiences, or the Word of God?

b. “In all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another”

The phrase “in all wisdom” indicates that singing is not mere entertainment or just preparation for the sermon; it is part of the message itself. Hymns and songs should align with the message being studied in worship.

Singing in the church should teach and exhort. Paul says “one another,” emphasizing that worship is participatory. Unlike a concert, where a few perform while others watch, music with purpose involves all singing and encouraging each other.

Teaching and exhortation spiritually edify, as Scripture confirms.

- Romans 12:7 tells us that we are to use the gifts God has given us to His glory: “... Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching....”
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Singing should be part of doctrinal teaching and exhortation, not mere entertainment.

c. “To the Lord”

Even when hymns or songs have a horizontal focus — teaching and exhorting the congregation — they must ultimately be directed to the Lord. God does not need to be taught or exhorted, but we do.

- “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:17).
- “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:23).

The Greek word *kurios*, translated as Lord, implies that we are His servants — a posture we must adopt in musical worship:

- “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.... But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Romans 6:18,22).

- “As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God” (1 Peter 2:16).

Worship should be approached humbly, as Job exemplifies: “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further” (Job 40:3-5).

All glory belongs to God alone:

- “I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another ...” (Isaiah 42:8).
- “... for mine own sake ... I will not give my glory unto another” (Isaiah 48:11).

d. “Singing”

Paul teaches that singing is a means for the Word of Christ to dwell within us. “And be not drunk with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.... Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Ephesians 5:18-21). Singing is both a command and a result of the Spirit’s work. We must sing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, purposefully, to edify, teach, and exhort.

e. “With grace in your hearts”

“Grace” here has been interpreted as gratitude, joy, or divine action. Calvin links it to Colossians 4:6: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt ...” (Colossians 4:6). Singing must be wholehearted — from the heart — with understanding and faith (1 Corinthians 14:15, Hebrews 11:6); and with reverence: “But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him” (Habakkuk 2:20).

Continued on page 8

MUSIC FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Continued from page 7

f. “With psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”

These are the three types of songs commanded in Scripture, as widely understood*:

- **Psalms:** Refers to the 150 psalms, often accompanied by instruments.
- **Hymns:** Religious odes or poems, solemn in nature, often with rich doctrinal content.
- **Spiritual songs:** Shorter spiritual compositions.

Examples, recorded in Scripture, from the early church:

- “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Timothy 3:16).
- “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Ephesians 5:14).

Other examples:

- Romans 11:33-36
- Philippians 2:6-11
- Colossians 1:15-20
- The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)
- The Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:67-80)
- The Song of Angels (Luke 2:14)
- The Song of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32)

Conclusion

As we conclude, we must reflect on what truly motivates our worship. While we may express gratitude for God’s blessings, true worship goes beyond thankfulness. It is centered on God Himself.

True worship focuses on pleasing God for who He is, not only for what He has done for us. Worship is an act of proclaiming His virtues and greatness (1 Peter 2:9). We must worship God with reverent fear (Luke 5:26).

Music always communicates a message... Both lyrics and music must reflect purity, order, and reverence. Music is moral. It can be good or bad. Believers must evaluate music biblically, rejecting styles contrary to Christian values and embracing those that glorify God.

Worship must be exclusively for God (Isaiah 42:8). Contemporary Christian music sometimes diverts glory from God to the singers, resembling the idol sacrifices described in 1 Corinthians 8.

Worship, while not primarily for our benefit, brings blessings. It draws us closer to God, deepens our knowledge of Him, and strengthens our relationship with Him. Songs should teach and exhort, with deep, doctrinal content. Music must align with lyrics; holiness cannot be expressed in words and contradicted by sensuality, anger, or shouting in music.

Music in the church is meant to teach, exhort, and cultivate reverence toward the Lord. Doxology must accompany doctrine, as seen in Psalms, Ephesians 3:20-21, and Romans 11:33-36. Music deserves a prominent role in teaching and exhortation.

If we consider music trivial, we ignore its profound impact. Music affects body, mind, and spirit, and, like all God-given tools, can be used for His glory or against Him.

Music always communicates a message, through lyrics and musical elements (melody, harmony, rhythm), impacting emotions, thoughts, and behavior. Both lyrics and music must reflect purity, order, and reverence. Music is moral; it can be good or bad. Believers must evaluate music biblically, rejecting styles contrary to Christian values and embracing those that glorify God.

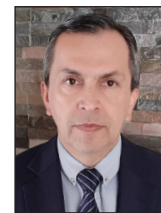
May God help us in this battle for worship that pleases Him. Let us not succumb to the enemy’s attacks, which seek to divert us from the essence of our faith — worshiping the Father in Spirit and Truth. Amen. •

* Groups which practice exclusive Psalmody in their worship, often view all three of these designations to refer to the book of Psalms.

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The Rev. Fernando Osses is the pastor of the “Castillo Fuerte” Fundamental Biblical Presbyterian Church of Puerto Montt, Chile, and serves



as President of the southern district of the presbytery. He also heads the “Castillo Fuerte” Christian radio ministry, and is the President of the Confederation of Evangelical Fundamental Churches of Chile (CIEF-Chile).



CIEF-Chile delegates and friends

The Confederation of Evangelical Fundamental Churches of Chile (CIEF-Chile) held its convention from January 29-31, 2026, in Padre Las Casas, Chile. The theme was “Lights in the World: Witnesses of the Truth in a World of Darkness.”

CIEF -Peru met from February 24-27, 2026, in the Andes Mountain city of Ayacucho, with the theme: “The Faithful Church in the End Times.”



CIEF-Chile President
Rev. Fernando Osses



CIEF-Peru President
Rev. Daniel Cueva



Young people at the CIEF-Peru Convention

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A JUST WAR?

Continued from page 1

(Isaiah 9:6), the Son of the “God of Peace” (Hebrews 13:20). Romans 12:18 tells us: “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” Ephesians 4:32 says: “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Even concerning those who are against us, we are told in Matthew 5:44: “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

Any true Christian hates war. The heart of a true believer is one of compassion, with the desire to see lost souls come to salvation in Jesus Christ — the only source of true peace.

Some of our anabaptist brethren are “pacifists,” holding these words of Christ to apply to all war. Yet, many in these groups have served in support roles in the conflicts in which the United States has been involved throughout its history.

“Wars and rumours of wars”

On another mountaintop, in what is often called the Olivet Discourse, Christ told His disciples: “... ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars...” This was shortly before His crucifixion. With a recognition that “... all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), and that “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...” it is a certainty that in this sinful world there will be hatred, crime, conflicts, and wars.

The Just War Doctrine

Questioning the proper stance Christians and whole countries should take concerning war is nothing new. Augustine of Hippo, in the fourth and fifth

centuries after Christ, is known for articulating a “just war” doctrine from his studies of the Scriptures. His teaching, largely, was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church and by most of Protestantism.

This has often been divided between *Jus ad Bellum* (the right to go to war), and *Jus in Bello* (conduct within war). Although different groups have different articulations of these concepts, some basic points include:

“They who have waged war in obedience to the divine command, or in conformity with His laws, have represented in their persons the public justice or the wisdom of government, and in this capacity have put to death wicked men; such persons have by no means violated the commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’”¹

Aurelius Augustine
Church father, 354-430 AD

Jus ad Bellum

THE RIGHT TO GO TO WAR

- Just wars must be **conducted by legitimate authorities**, not individuals. Romans 13:3-4 states: “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; **for he beareth not the sword in vain**: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”
- **The cause must be just**: War is legitimate only for defense, restoring peace, or protecting the innocent (the “neighbor”) from aggression. Proverbs

6:17 tells us that God “hates ... hands that shed innocent blood.”

Westminster Larger Catechism Question 135 asks: “What are the duties required in the sixth commandment [Thou shalt not kill]?” In the answer we are told that one of our duties is “to preserve the life of ourselves and others by ... just defense thereof against violence.”

The answer to Question 136 states in part: “The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defense....”

Augustine wrote: “They who have waged war in obedience to the divine command, or in conformity with His laws, have represented in their persons the public justice or the wisdom of government, and in this capacity have put to death wicked men; such persons have by no means violated the commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’”¹

- **It must be the last resort**: War is only permissible when all other diplomatic options have been exhausted. We are called to be peacemakers, to be longsuffering. Psalm 11:5 states: “The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.” Even when forced to go to war, it should be with sorrow and a heart of peace.
 - John Calvin wrote “... assuredly all other means must be tried before having recourse to arms.... They must not allow themselves to be carried away by any private feeling, but be guided solely by regard for the public. Acting otherwise, they wickedly abuse their power which was given them, not for their own advantage, but for the good and service of others.”²
- **The intention must be right**: The objective must be to achieve a “just peace,” not to acquire land, wealth, or revenge. “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place

unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19). It must be done with the motive of bringing peace, and saving innocent lives.

Jus in Bello

PROPER CONDUCT WITHIN WAR

- **Will the end be better than the original situation:** It must be firmly believed that the war will bring justice and peace, and save as many innocent lives as possible.

- **Protection of Noncombatants:** A war should be waged with a primary goal of protecting innocent noncombatants from undue suffering and death.

- **Intention in how the war is waged:** Just as the intentions behind the commencement of a war must be just, the actions taken also must not be vengeful or designed to inflict unnecessary pain or death.

The Old Testament

In the Old Testament, instances of war are ubiquitous — some just, and some unjust. There are a number of occasions where God directly ordered His people to engage in war — particularly in the conquest of Canaan. There are some occasions where the Children of Israel did not follow God’s instructions in war, which led to God’s judgment and even oppression by the enemies of God.

But, many today claim, “Well that was the Old Testament. Christ came to bring peace.”

The New Testament

Some have erroneously stated that the New Testament never sanctions war or violence. Yet, as was quoted earlier, Romans 13:4 tells us that a just ruler **“beareth not the sword in vain:** for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

“Now if small robberies are rightly punished (committed against a few), how much more severely should the great and public robberies be punished of those who endeavor to lay waste a state and to devastate regions? He is bound to undertake the defense of his subjects and to have a care for the public tranquility and safety; to guard the laws against the contumacious and open enemies who strive to destroy them (which cannot be done without just war).”³

Francis Turretin

17th century Reformed theologian, commenting on Romans 13:4

We know that any civilized state must have the ability to punish and incarcerate individual criminals. Renowned theologian Francis Turretin makes a proper correlation to just wars: “Now if small robberies are rightly punished (committed against a few), how much more severely should the great and public robberies be punished of those who endeavor to lay waste a state and to devastate regions? He is bound to undertake the defense of his subjects and to have a care for the public tranquility and safety; to guard the laws against the contumacious and open enemies who strive to destroy them (which cannot be done without just war).”³

Many theologians have pointed to a number of other New Testament passages.

Soldier imagery in the Scriptures

In 2 Timothy 2:3, Paul tells his young mentee Timothy: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul compares the Christian life to a battle, telling Christians to put on the complete armaments that God has provided.

This, of course, is speaking of spiritual warfare. Yet, if there are no just

wars, and all warfare is unbiblical, why would God use such military imagery? Certainly Paul would not instruct Timothy to be a “good thief,” or a “good arsonist.” This imagery is used because there is necessary and proper warfare, which requires disciplined, dedicated soldiers to conduct it.

John the Baptist

In Luke 3, we see John the Baptist preaching the Gospel of repentance and announcing the Messiah to the people. The soldiers who were in the multitude came to him. John the Baptist “said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.” It was the custom of some unscrupulous soldiers to abuse their power in harming the common citizens, and lying about them — either to receive bribes, or to get them in trouble with the authorities.

In 412 AD, Augustine wrote a letter to one Marcellinus, in which he stated: “For if the Christian religion condemned wars of every kind, the command given in the gospel to soldiers asking counsel as to salvation would rather be to cast away their arms, and

Continued on page 12

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A JUST WAR?

Continued from page 11

withdraw themselves wholly from military service; whereas the word spoken to such was, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages, Luke 3:14 — the command to be content with their wages manifestly implying no prohibition to continue in the service.”⁴

Christ and the centurion

The Lord Jesus Christ did not condemn upstanding soldiers. In fact, in Matthew 8 we read of the centurion who came humbly to Jesus beseeching Him to heal his servant, which Christ did.

This centurion told Christ: “For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it” (Matthew 8:9).

Christ could have told him to repent and leave his position if he believed it to be a sin. But, in the very next verse, we read: “When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

In John 8, in the account of the woman taken in adultery, Christ does find her actions to be evil, and tells her to “GO, and sin no more.”

Even after healing the man at the Pool of Bethesda, Jesus told him: “... Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.” Many times in the Gospels we see Christ identifying sin and calling people to repentance.

In contrast, we do not see Christ declaring the centurion’s occupation to be a sin, when he instructed him to “go.” Instead, verse 13 tells us: “And Jesus said unto the centurion, GO thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.”

Peter and Cornelius

We will give a final instance of how a military leader was described in the New Testament. In Acts 10:1-2, we are told of Cornelius, “a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.”

We continue in verses 3 and 4 to read that Cornelius “saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.”

Pope Leo XIV and Catholicism

You may judge the specifics of the present war with Iran as you wish, but it is important that we understand what the Scriptures teach concerning such matters.

On Palm Sunday, Pope Leo XIV stated in his homily: “He [God] does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war, but rejects them, saying: ‘Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen: your hands are full of blood.’” He further made comparison to Christ’s going to the cross without defending Himself as how all offenders should be treated.

The Pope appears to contradict the teaching in the Catholic Catechism, the statements of former popes, and other official writings of the Church. He further draws no moral distinction between terrorist regimes, and those nations which follow the principles set forth in the Just War doctrine — held widely by various church groups for many centuries.

No Christian relishes war. In fact, he will always strive for peace. However, we believe that the Scriptures teach that there are times when good governments must “bear the sword.”

Pope Leo XIV is an advocate of Liberation Theology, which is Marxist. Blog-

ger Mike Rivage-Seul describes himself as “emeritus professor of Peace & Social Justice Studies, liberation theologian, activist, former Roman Catholic priest.” He writes: “Ever since Chicago’s Robert Prevost became Pope Leo XIV, I’ve held back from judging the direction of his papacy.... Now, with the publication of the apostolic exhortation *Dilexi Te*, the cards are finally on the table. Though written by Pope Francis before his death [also an advocate of Liberation Theology], Pope Leo has fully endorsed and expanded it — embracing it as co-author and carrying forward its message with enthusiasm.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not condemn upstanding soldiers. In fact, in Matthew 8 we read of the centurion who came humbly to Jesus beseeching Him to heal his servant, which Christ did.

This centurion told Christ: “For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth ...” (Matthew 8:9).

Christ could have told the centurion to repent and leave his military career, if it were indeed sinful. But, in the very next verse, we read: “When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

“As a liberation theologian, I find this development deeply encouraging. *Dilexi Te* is a clear affirmation of liberation theology...”⁵

Those with this skewed Marxist ideology often stand against the just

interests of prosperous nations. At any rate, this Pope has departed from the Just War doctrine expounded by Augustine, previous popes, the Catholic Catechism, and certainly the Scriptures.

Conclusion

In the times of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, we see those who said “peace, peace; when there is no peace.” We all must be peacemakers, but at the same time recognize that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse” (2 Timothy 3:13), and that “the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16).

In times like the days in which we live, let us take heed to the words of the Apostle Paul: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; **For kings, and for all that are in authority**; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour” (1 Timothy 2:1-3).

May we pray that the Lord will give our leaders wisdom, and that His mighty sovereign hand will be upon us in these dangerous days. •

¹Aurelius Augustine, *City of God* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), book 1, chapter 21, p. 32.

²John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), vol. 2, book 4, chapter 20, sections 11 and 12, p. 662.

³Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Geiger, ed. James T. Dennison Jr. (Philipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994), vol. 2, p. 113.

⁴*The Letters of St. Augustine*, compiled by W.A. Sparrow-Simpson, letter 138 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1919), p.233.

⁵<https://mikerivageseul.com/2025/10/17/with-dilexi-te-pope-leo-tips-his-hand-toward-liberation-theology/>

Present With the Lord

On April 8, 2026, the Rev. Dr. Nadir Carreño Maufras, aged 94, was called into the presence of his Lord and Savior, of whom he had been a faithful servant since his adolescence.

Rev. Carreño was widely recognized as a great Christian leader within the biblical fundamentalist and Presbyterian evangelical movement in Chile, Latin America, and in many countries around the world.

He was one of the founders of the Fundamental Biblical Presbyterian Church Smirna of Quinta Normal, Santiago, Chile. He was appointed the first ruling elder and president of the consistory in 1967.

After his ordination, he was installed as pastor of his beloved Smirna Church in 1971, a position he held without interruption, with singular faithfulness, for 55 years, until he was called home.

Throughout his extensive ministry, he was a distinguished professor and director of what is now the Fundamentalist Biblical Seminary, where he taught nearly all subjects. He also served as a professor at the Baptist Biblical Seminary.

He was a tireless preacher of the gospel of salvation, and encouraged the congregation to carry this message everywhere, and to form Bible study groups in homes, a number of which eventually became churches.

He and his beloved wife Ruth, and their family, traveled throughout vast, often difficult to reach regions of Chile, and other countries, preaching in churches of various Bible-believing denominations.

As a tireless defender of the faith, he served as president of the Confederation of Evangelical Fundamental Churches of Chile, the Latin American Alliance of Christian Churches, and the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC). As ICCC president, he organized two world congresses, and was a speaker at the meetings of these

organizations, both in Chile and around the world. For many years he had a weekly radio ministry, where he defended Biblical Christianity.

For health reasons, he left the presidency of the Council in 2017, but he remained active in the organization as first vice president, and a member of the Executive Committee. He remained active in these roles until a few days before his passing.

He was a prolific writer, leaving innumerable books and studies on books of the Bible, theology, apostasy, defense of the faith, sanctification, service, and spiritual growth, among other topics.

Rev. Carreño also distinguished himself in a number of professional activities in the world of education that he carried out throughout his career. Some things include:

- State professor of mathematics in important educational institutions.
- Full professor of mathematics at the University of Santiago, from 1973 until his retirement; also in the faculty of administration and economics, faculty secretary and curriculum registrar; in the faculty of sciences, curriculum registrar.
- In the political sphere, he was an important writer, promoter, and defender of Chile's Law on Religious Worship, rejecting left-wing actions that sought to severely limit the religious freedom of Protestant churches. He was invited to defend his position on television programs.

In the final years of his life, overcoming his physical limitations, he continued his tireless service to the Lord right to the end.

He will be deeply missed by Christians around the world.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” — Psalm 116:15



The Rev. Brad Gsell is a minister of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Charlotte, NC, and President of the International Council of Christian Churches and of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions.

THE HANDS OF GOD AND THE HANDS OF MEN

Continued from page 1

the Jewish people were in captivity in a position of diminished power, but were used of God to preserve the existence of God's people, return them to Jerusalem, restore the temple and rebuild the protecting wall around Jerusalem.

Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah belong to the period called The Restoration, when the Jewish people were in captivity in a position of diminished power, but were used of God to preserve the existence of God's people, return them to Jerusalem, restore the temple and rebuild the protecting wall around Jerusalem.

I chose to feature these three because many churches today are in a similar condition of diminished strength and effectiveness, but God has a plan to use them even now.

I chose to feature these three because many churches today are in a similar condition of diminished strength and effectiveness, but God has a plan to use them even now.

Esther

In the Book of Esther, the name of God is not even mentioned, but we see His hand in all that unfolds in this story:

- the deposition of Queen Vashti after she refused to appear before the drunk-en king and his cohorts;
- the Jewish Esther being chosen as her replacement;
- the "hand" of Mordecai, raising the orphan Esther as his own, then guiding her through all the events that encircled her;
- the discovery of two chamberlains that "sought to lay hands on the king Ahasuerus" (2:21);
- Haman's underhanded plot to exterminate the Jews;
- Esther's part in protecting the Jews from destruction; and, finally,
- Mordecai's astounding rise to power.

The hands of Haman, the plotting officials, Mordecai and Esther pervade the story, but behind it all is the hand of God, His presence and control over all things.

Ezra

Next, we read about the Jews who returned to Jerusalem after 70 years in captivity. They undertook to rebuild the altar of God for burnt offerings (Ezra 3:2). In the second year, work began on rebuilding the foundation of the temple (3:8-10). They encountered opposition from their ungodly neighbors. In their defense, the Jews explained,

"But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God" (5:12,13).

When their enemies appealed to King Darius to see if the former King Cyrus ever did give permission for the Jews to rebuild, he searched and found this record: "In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded,

the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid ..." (6:3). Therefore, Darius directed and allowed the temple construction.

As an aside, this reminds us of our current time. Rulers and presidents may do their will, concerning which we may either approve or disapprove, but, unless it is directly contrary to the expressed will of God, we must submit. The Westminster Confession of Faith explains, "It is the duty of people ... to obey their lawful authority" (Chapter 23, Section 4).

In Ezra 7:6, after the genealogy, we read "This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him." Further in the chapter, after the king gives him orders and supplies to go rebuild the temple, Ezra writes, "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which ... hath extended mercy upon me before the king and his counsellors, and before the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me ..." (7:27-28).

When Ezra sent men to call for Levites for the house of God, he wrote, "And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought a man of understanding ..." (8:18). As Ezra was ready to set forth on his journey to Jerusalem, he wrote, "I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horse-

The Good News...

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Hebrews 9:28)

men to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken to the king, saying, **The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him**; but his power and his wrath is against them that forsake him” (8:22). Ezra continues writing the history: “Then we departed from the river of Ahava ... to go unto Jerusalem: and **the hand of our God was upon us**, and he delivered us from the **hand** of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way” (8:31).

In contrast to the hand of God, Ezra tells us about another element who were disobedient in Jerusalem: “For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons, ... yea, **the hand of the princes and rulers** hath been chief in this trespass” (9:2). The difference between Ezra and his companions and the high rulers cannot be missed.

Nehemiah

The third individual we come to is Nehemiah. A delegation from Jerusalem travels up to Shushan and reports on the dismal condition of their countrymen and the city. Nehemiah, much burdened with the news, makes it a matter of prayer to God, confessing the sins of the Jewish people as the cause of their humiliation, and asking for mercy from God. He ends his prayer with this reference: “Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and **by thy strong hand**. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king’s cupbearer” (Nehemiah 1:10,11). King Artaxerxes did grant him permission to return to Jerusalem, a sign of God’s hand upon him.

Nehemiah’s first action in Jerusalem was to go out secretly by night and examine the whole wall. Next he spoke

to the people: “Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then **I told them of the hand of my God** which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had

It humbles us to know that God stoops to use the positions, talents, and dedication of His regenerated saints. The reach of God’s hand in the lives of men, especially of His own people, is immeasurable.

spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they **strengthened their hands** for this good work” (Nehemiah 2:17,18).

When Sanballat and Tobiah, as well as the Arabians, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites hear of it, they “conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.” But, Nehemiah adds, “Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them” (4:8-9). So half of the people held weapons and half of them kept on building. Verse 17 adds, “They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one **with one of his hands** wrought in the work, and with **the other hand held a weapon**.”

When the work was finished, Nehemiah gathered all the people to read them the book of the law and praise God for His care of them. As they related how God had led his people out of Egypt, they say that the hand of Moses, the venerable servant of God, was the instrument of giving them God’s law: “And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, **by the hand of Moses** thy servant” (9:14).

In the ongoing repetition of God’s goodness in Israel’s history and their own sinful actions, verse 27 reminds them: “Therefore thou deliveredst them into **the hand of their enemies**, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, **who saved them out of the hand of their enemies**.”

Then verse 28 reminds them how they failed to obey God: “But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the land of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies.... Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them **into the hand of the people of the lands**” (9:28,30).

The hand of God is of infinite power, omniscience, and omnipotence, so that no man can stay His hand or ask Him what He does (Daniel 4:35). All His communicable attributes — being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth — shape all that He does. His hand allows and limits what evil men do. It humbles us to know that He stoops to use the positions, talents, and dedication of His regenerated saints. The reach of God’s hand in the lives of men, especially of His own people, is immeasurable. David wrote in Psalm 139:6, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high. I cannot attain unto it.”

May we give our hands to God’s work in dependence and submission on Him and may the hand of our God be upon us for good. •



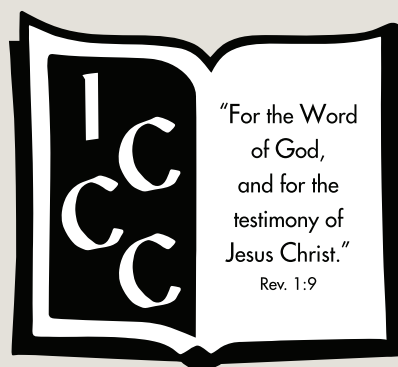
The Rev. Robert Anderson is a minister in Faith Presbyterian, Bible Presbyterian Church, residing in Lakewood, WA.

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“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God ...” —EPHESIANS 6:13-17