

have enjoyed in the West, what were his motives? Like Constantine in ancient Rome, he found this necessary for the good of the Empire—and may have even thought that freedom would destroy the church even more effectively than oppression. Indeed, such has been the case. Sadly, many Soviet Christians who have managed to bring their families out to the West and have initially thanked God for liberty, have lost their children to drugs, free sex, pride, lust, and worldliness—evils that seem to be a greater hazard for believers in the West’s “freedom” than under communist oppression.

### **The True Scale of the Rescue Operation**

Today’s “Christian activism” is far too narrow and selective. It addresses certain issues but ignores many others of equal or greater importance. We must not only rescue the unborn, but the children in public schools who are being perverted through the teaching of immorality, witchcraft, and occultism. We must identify psychology as the major vehicle of so much of this evil, and root it out of our churches, seminaries and universities.

We must denounce sin, call for national repentance, and preach the gospel in convicting power. Christians must call for repentance not only for homosexuality, child abuse, pornography and abortion, but for more subtle forms of rebellion against God and rejection of Christ. The church must be indicted not only for its lack of social concern, but for its heresies and failure to preach the truth. We must denounce the destructive false teachings that abound. It is hypocritical for the church to protest the world’s sins while tolerating within itself and honoring those who preach a false gospel and are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Instead of protests we need prophets who call the world to repentance: Enochs who walk with God and warn of judgment (Genesis 5:22-24, Jude 14-15); Noahs, “preachers of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5), who warn of judgment to come and invite sinners into an ark of safety. What if, instead of building the ark, Noah had tried to reform society! We need Daniels: “Mene, mene, tekel upharsin”—the handwriting is on the wall, America! You’ve been weighed in the balance and found wanting! Murdered babies, the abomination of homosexuality, and society’s flippant, deliberate rebellion against God have aroused His anger beyond any possibility of reprieve! We need Isaiahs and Jeremiahs, who had never heard of making a “positive confession” or of the “power of positive or possibility

thinking,” but preached truth!

“Christian activism” is not Christian. It represents a detour from the straight path the church is to walk before the world. It can confuse the real issues, lead to compromise and unholy alliances, and divert time and effort that would better be used in proclaiming the gospel. Weigh the demands upon your time and set priorities. Be fully engaged in rescuing souls for eternity.

—Dave Hunt

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# **Christian Activism**

## **Change through Coercion?**

Increasing numbers of Christians are engaging in social and political “activism” for the astonishing purpose of attempting to coerce an ungodly society into adopting Christian standards of conduct. “Operation Rescue” is one example. Its founder, Randall Terry, explains that its purpose is to create social upheaval and thereby pressure government into changing the abortion laws. A typical brochure declares, “Rescues help produce the social tension necessary for political change....[W]hether for good or bad, political change comes after groups of Americans bring enough tension to the nation and pressure on politicians that the laws are changed.”

No matter how commendable the goal of such tactics, there is *not one example in the entire Bible* of political or social “activism” ever being advocated or used by God’s people. That fact must weigh heavily upon any consideration of this important topic. There are numerous cases of *civil disobedience* in Scripture, but it was *never* engaged in for the purpose of forcing an ungodly society to obey Biblical principles. The Hebrew midwives, for example, disobeyed Pharaoh’s edict and spared the lives of the male babies, even lying to cover up their “rescue operation.” God was so pleased with their obedience to Him that their names, Shiphrah and Puah, have been preserved for us (Exodus 1:15-22). This was, however, a matter of *individual conscience* before God, *not* an organized attempt to pressure the pagan Egyptians by mass demonstrations into adopting Israel’s God-given morals.

The same is true of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego’s refusal to obey the king’s command to bow to an idol, and of Daniel’s defiance of the royal decree against prayer. Though boldly witnessing for God even to kings, Daniel *never* used his high government position to attempt to pressure a pagan society into practicing a godly way of life. Nor did Joseph or Esther pressure the pagan societies, in which they held high positions, to adopt Biblical morals. So it was with Ezra and Nehemiah. They used their influence with kings to obtain permission to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, but made no attempt to change the practices of those societies though they practiced abortion, homosexuality, and other evils.

## Biblical Examples?

There are *no Biblical examples* to support today's "Christian activism." Christ "*suffered* for us, leaving us *an example that we should follow his steps.*" He sternly and repeatedly rebuked Israel's false religious leaders, yet He *never* spoke out—*not even once*—against the injustices of Roman civil authority! Nor did He advocate, organize, or engage in any public protests to pressure Rome into changing its corrupt system, or the society of His day its evil ways. He submitted to unjust authorities as Romans 13 tells us we should do today: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:21-25). No "activism" here! So it was with the apostles and the early church.

Yes, Paul told the centurion, who was about to have him unlawfully scourged, that he was a Roman citizen; and he told the local officials at Philippi to come and apologize for beating him and Silas without trial. That was not, however, political/social "activism." He was not attempting thereby to change society; he was simply standing up for his personal rights under the law—as we should do, which includes voting.

Paul was determined to obey God rather than men and never held back from preaching the gospel, though it meant his life. If "Christian activism" is God's will, Paul would have been the first to pursue it fearlessly at whatever cost.

Scripture, then, from Genesis to Revelation, offers neither example nor doctrinal teaching to support the idea that Christians ought to engage in political/social activism, lobbying, takeover methods of Coalition on Revival—or that Christians in public office could or should influence society to adopt Biblical standards of conduct. Don't forget, any change would have to be effected through a corrupt political system involving an ungodly majority above and below. Romans 13 tells us to obey rulers, and 1 Timothy 2 to pray for them—not to attempt to change them by coercion. It is not only foolish but counterproductive to attempt to persuade the unsaved to live like Christians. They can't do it—and if they could it would only blind them the more to their sin and need of a Savior.

Acts 19:23-41 tells how a large group of citizens in Ephesus staged a huge "demonstration" against Paul and the gospel he preached. A crowd of probably several thousand persons tore their clothes, threw dust in the air and for two hours vociferously chanted their praise to the locally manufactured god that was their chief source of income. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" they cried. Should Paul have gathered a larger crowd of Christians to

cry out yet more loudly and longer and thereby impose their will upon the local authorities? Of course not! Such un-Christian conduct is demeaning of our Lord and His gospel and would have been unthinkable for the early church. Yet that is basically what "Christian activism" involves today—the well-meaning but foolish attempt to force "Christian principles" upon a godless society through more effective lobbying, larger demonstrations and greater "social upheaval" than the homosexuals, abortionists or pornographers can produce.

## Won to Christ—Living for Christ

Rather than to pressure the ungodly to live like saints, we must win them to Christ that they might live wholly for God. Our *personal lives* must be lived in obedience to God's laws even if that brings us into conflict with civil laws. In addition to avoiding idolatry and immorality, Christians must *preach the gospel* to everyone everywhere, regardless of government edicts to the contrary. In so doing, the apostles made that historic declaration: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29)! Their example has been followed by Christians down through the centuries, from the martyrs under pagan Rome and its successor, Roman Catholicism, to those who smuggle Bibles into Islamic or communist lands today.

Though forbidden by the authorities, the apostles persisted in preaching the gospel. Like their Lord, however, they made no attempt to lobby in Rome for an end to prostitution and abortions; nor did they stage public demonstrations for a change in unjust laws. There is a danger of being so caught up in the social aspect of good causes that one forgets and neglects the chief Christian calling. The Great Commission does not involve exerting a Christian influence upon society. We are not to "change society," but to "convert individuals." There is much talk today about "changing the world for Christ." In fact there is no Biblical teaching or example to support that popular slogan. Rather than persuading sinners to live like saints, we must call them to heavenly citizenship through "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

But aren't we supposed to be "salt and light" in the world (Matthew 5:13-16)? Yes, Christ said so. To understand what he meant, we must look to Him as our perfect example. Jesus, "the light of the world," never advocated or tried to effect social/political change. His *light* reveals sin and leads men to salvation, fitting them for heaven (Ephesians 5:8-13). *Salt* purifies the wound that light reveals and reproves.

Significant changes in society have been effected by preaching and example. Nevertheless, the abolition of

slavery, the enactment of child labor laws and greater rights for women, while they are improvements to be thankful for, have not made society any more godly. Nor is it any more likely under these better conditions that a higher percentage of mankind will end up in heaven than before. While such changes are worth working for, many who call themselves Christians have become so absorbed in good causes that they have lost their fervor for saving souls. They have ended up joining forces with non-Christians who also espouse "traditional values," and in promoting a compromised "social gospel" that cannot save.

## What Should We Do Then?

Yet the good that social/political activism often produces is a strong motivation for engaging in it. Many Christians were involved in the civil rights movement that finally ended segregation. Surely it is not wrong for Christians to engage in such activities! Certainly the innocent babies who are being murdered in abortion clinics, just as the Jews were in Nazi extermination camps, ought to be rescued! Should Christians do nothing? Is there no basis in Scripture for helping those who are downtrodden?

Yes, the Bible warns us, "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" (Proverbs 24:11-12). The parable of the Good Samaritan, too, tells us that we ought to care for all those who are in need of help, even as Christ commands: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you (Matthew 7:12). These principles come under God's law written in the consciences of all mankind: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

We ought to do all we can to rescue babies who are being aborted, just as we would seek to rescue anyone in danger. The Bible doesn't tell us what individual saints may have done in this regard because it is not specifically a Christian task nor is it something which has been assigned to the church, but is the responsibility of every person. Moreover, "Rescues" should be engaged in to save lives—not for the purpose of creating "social upheaval" to coerce an evil society into adopting Biblical standards.

When Gorbachev granted freedom of worship and preaching in the Soviet Union comparable to what we