

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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THE DAYS ARE EVIL

Therefore, be watching how carefully you are walking about [fig., conducting yourselves], not as unwise but as wise, redeeming [fig., making the best use of] the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5.15-16 ALT)

For this reason, take up the full armor of God, so that you shall be able to resist in the day of evil, and having accomplished [or, overcome] everything, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6.13 ALT)

Recently, I read a news article that was titled “*Group waging anti-Bush campaign*” (Richmond-Times Dispatch, Associated Press). This is nothing new, for this sort of thing has been going on for the entire 2 terms of our current president. But what struck me was the subtitle of this article: “*Goal: Ensure that popularity doesn’t rise at end of term.*” Their goal, which obviously is politically motivated, is to ensure that President Bush’s approval ratings remain low and do not rise as he nears the end of his term. They plan to spend \$8.5 million to wage this campaign of what I will call “evil.”

I recognize that there are some Christians who dislike our president. I have even heard some Christian commentators question whether he is saved or not. This saddens my heart, and, frankly, puts some “fire in my belly.” These are most likely the same ones who tell other believers that they are not saved because they believe in the reconciliation and restoration of all things. They tell such ones that they are “going to hell” for such beliefs, along with the billions of unbelievers that God has decided, in His love, to torture forever and ever in a fiery place called *hell*. Such reasoning is evil! I recall the first inauguration of President Bush. There were two men who prayed over his administration **in the name of Jesus**. When I heard those prayers, the first words that came out of my mouth were: “The gauntlet has been thrown down.” What I meant was that evil was going to come against this president who willingly proclaimed that he believed in Jesus.

Some do not believe he is saved (or perhaps just dislike him) because they don’t agree with some of his policies, and others say this because they don’t like the way he has been supporting a Palestinian state and the giving up of land by the state of Israel. Yet, other Christians do not like him because he supports Israel and has taken our country into war, not peace. Well, this should not surprise us, for within Christendom, there is so much confusion and disagreement over interpretation of Scripture, especially the prophetic word, that it only makes sense that this would spill over into political and other world views as well. However, let me be clear that it is not the purpose of this issue to debate or settle these differences, as if any one person could even come close to settling the differences in the first place. This issue is not about politics.

My point is three-fold. *First*, our president is a man who, like all of us, makes mistakes. He is a sinner saved by grace just like the rest of us who proclaim the name of Jesus. Let us just pray that he walks in the light he has, just like the rest of us are to walk. Jesus answered the accusers of the woman caught in adultery: “**He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her**” (John 8.7 NASB). Let us not live in glass houses with stones in our hands.

Second, God alone places leaders in authority, **for there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God** (Romans 13.1 NASB). The man who sits in the White

House today is there because God gave him the authority to be there, just as He did to the previous president whom many Christians disliked and said very similar things about as well.

Third, which is the theme of this issue, the days are evil. Paul said this about 2,000 years ago. Do you think the days have changed for the better as we approach the end of our present wicked eon, another expression given to us by Paul (Galatians 1.4 CV)? I hardly think so!

The Greek word from which the word *evil* is translated is *poneros*, which means “hurtful (properly in effect or influence).” It does not refer essentially to character but to the effects of one’s action to bring harm or hurt to others. In other words, the word *evil* as used in **the days are evil** does not impugn the character of any one person; rather, it speaks of a hurtful influence or action that permeates the day.

Who can argue that a group trying to raise an obscene amount of money that is to be used for the sole purpose of trying to destroy a man who has given eight very difficult years to this country is **EVIL**? We do not have to know anything about the people behind this. What we can see is that their action is evil in its intent. It is hurtful not only to the one to whom it is directed but to our very nation about which many (admittedly, not all) proclaim “In God we trust.” By the way, \$8.5 million could go a long way toward feeding many or helping combat disease in the third-world. Give me a portion of it, and I will send it to saints whom I know would be greatly helped, not only personally, but who would put it to use for the growth of the body of Christ, for the building up of itself in love.

If you belong to the Lord, you must realize that this day is evil and that you must be careful how you walk. Do not be persuaded by the many things of this evil day that are trying to bring harm to others for personal, political, ideological, or any other goal. We need to heed Paul’s exhortation.

Therefore, be watching how carefully you are walking about [fig., conducting yourselves], not as unwise but as wise, redeeming [fig., making the best use of] the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5.15-16 ALT)

In evil days we are to conduct ourselves in a wise and, we could say, a redemptive way. Our Lord is a redeemer, and we must walk in His light of redemption, making the best use of our time, not wasting it on anything that even comes close to evil. **Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good** (Romans 12.9 NASB). **Abstain from every form of evil** (1 Thessalonians 5.22 NASB). In warning Timothy that in the last days perilous times will come, so Paul also warns us: **But evil people and impostors will advance to the worse [fig., will go from bad to worse], leading astray [fig., deceiving] and being led astray [fig., being deceived]** (2 Timothy 3.13 ALT).

Let us not point the finger at men but direct our prayer toward the unseen forces that drive the evil in the days of evil. Again, we need to heed Paul’s exhortation.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6.10-13 NASB)

Our way through the days of evil and any specific evil day that we find ourselves in is to stand strong in the Lord. Let us not try to harm others or stand with anyone else who tries to harm others. Our battle is not against flesh and blood (that is, people), but against the evil forces that drive most of the people of the world, especially political world leaders.

With all prayer and petition, let us pray at all times in spirit, with this in view **because the days are evil.**