

HARVEST ROCK CHURCH

CONFRONTING THE POWERS OF DARKNESS

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TEXT: Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 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.

INTRO: In the light of the new lockdown mandated by Gov. Newsom, I want to put a pause on our series on the Ten Commandments to address this new lockdown. There is something larger at play here; there is a spiritual battle that is taking place over our nation and over our state. It is interesting that the Bible says that we are not to forsake the assembling of the saints all the more as you see the *Day drawing near* in Hebrews 10:25. The writer of Hebrews was addressing the Jewish believers in the Diaspora who were experiencing persecution, telling them to not allow the persecution prevent them from gathering together and worshipping. The Day drawing near is referring to the second coming of Jesus. The writer is implying as the Day of Jesus' second coming draws near, there will be opposition for the church to meet together. Another way to say it is as we are drawing closer to the second coming of Jesus, it is crucial that we gather to meet to pray and worship. I believe that by gathering together to worship is part of how we confront the powers of darkness.

The Bible gives us two clear directives on how to meet. We see the early church meeting from house to house and also in the Temple. If you are meeting at home and watching us online, you are doing what the Bible is encouraging you to do. That is why Life Groups are so important.

And we want to again stress and encourage those with underlying conditions to stay home. As well as young people who are living with your elderly parents, please stay home (Acts 2:46).

However, meeting at home is one half of the picture. The other was gathering in the Temple, and historically that would be gathering in larger services, and for us it would be meeting in our auditorium. I believe the Holy Spirit will manifest in the home as well as in the corporate meeting. Jesus said, "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst" (Matthew 18:20).

By resuming our in-house meeting, I want to submit to you that we are actually doing spiritual warfare. Besides worship, we are also coming in the opposite spirit of what I would call the Anti-Christ spirit that is trying to lock down the church.

In 1995 when the Lord told us to go into protracted meetings, I didn't understand fully that by meeting five nights a week for three years, we were cleansing the spiritual atmosphere over Pasadena.

We saw the murder rate in Pasadena, the highest per capita in LA, drop from 1 homicide a day (365 a year) to today, almost nothing. The gangs were moved out of Pasadena.

Old Pasadena was literally revived. When we first moved to Pasadena in 1984, Old Pasadena was a dilapidated, run-down, red-light district of Pasadena with adult bookstores competing with each other. Today it is a major tourist attraction with high-end stores and restaurants and no prostitutes or adult bookstores.

There are many other testimonies like the Worldwide Church of God experiencing revival and shifting from a cult to an evangelical church.

Critics will say that this is a coincidence, but I believe that through our protracted services, we saw a measure of transformation in our city. Today, I believe that the Lord has asked us to take spiritual warfare to another level, from a city level to a state level.

I. FROM OUR TEXT: THREE TRUTHS

A. THE ENEMY IS THE ENEMY

1. People are not the enemy. Governor Newsom is not the enemy. I am not saying that people are not responsible. Ultimately all of us will stand before God on that Great Day of Judgment. Yes, we do have to hold our leaders accountable, especially in our democratic society. The devil is the enemy. Satan and his cohorts are behind the evil that takes place in a given society or nation.

B. SATAN'S KINGDOM IS A HIGHLY ORGANIZED HIERARCHY

1. Satan is a copycat. He has copied the hierarchy of God's angelic realm. In God's angelic world you have a hierarchy with Archangels like Michael and Gabriel at the top of the list.
2. In the book of Daniel, we see "the Prince of Persia," a demonic principality, hindering Daniel's prayer (Daniel 10:10-14). It stands to reason that there are other "Princes" over nations. I believe that there is a major principality over the United States.
3. Even in God's Kingdom, there seems to be a hierarchy. Even though every believer is equal before God, not all have the same authority or place in His Kingdom. In Revelation we see the 12 Apostles of the Lamb having a special place in the new heavens and earth (Revelation 21:14). Paul emphasizes the different rank and order in 1 Corinthians 12:28: "God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers..." All are equal, but not all have the same authority.

C. WE ARE TO WAGE SPIRITUAL BATTLE USING GOD'S STRENGTH AND HIS WEAPONS

1. **Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil**
2. Zechariah 4:6: It is not by our power or might that we win this battle.
3. The full armor of God is the gospel of what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross, including the authority that He regained: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). I believe that Jesus defeated the enemy and took his authority. We are here to mop up the job. D-Day vs. V-Day. When the allied forces landed on Normandy France on June 6, 1944, essentially WWII was over. But between D-Day and V-Day, May 8, 1945, some of the worst battles took place. Even though Jesus defeated Satan on the cross, we are still in a major battle for the hearts of men.
4. **Ephesians 6:13 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. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

II. SATAN'S STRATEGY TO SET UP A COUNTERFEIT KINGDOM

A. TODAY'S ANTI-CHRIST SPIRIT ATTACK ON GOD AND THE CHURCH

1. Last weekend, the rioters attacked our church buildings. It took more than 50 firefighters to put out the mountain of flames at San Gabriel Mission, which — by Saturday night — was burned down, just months shy of its 250-year birthday celebration. This is one of many missions established by St. Junipero Serra, whose statue was torn down in San Francisco and LA.
2. Early Sunday morning last weekend, at Florida's Queen of Peace Catholic Church, church members were praying in the sanctuary when a car crashed through the foyer. A man in Florida plowed his vehicle into the building and then poured gasoline in the foyer, and then set the building on fire before driving off. Laughing about it later with police, the 23-year-old arsonist said he was on a "mission." Turns out, it was a mission that several radicals shared, as a wave of destruction hit as many as five more churches in 48 hours. Even historically black congregations were targets, as Calvary Baptist in San Diego watched its building for children's ministry burn to the ground after a blaze started in the attic.
3. Again, last weekend, in New York City, the mobs made bonfires out of two Virgin Mary statues. Tuesday, even a Jesus sculpture was decapitated. This has nothing to do with Confederates or George Floyd's death. It is an anti-Christ spirit that is unleashed. Family Research Center notes that all of this is a smokescreen to exploit the mobs' real agenda: to fundamentally transforming America into a socialist state. The rioters are Marxist and want to tear down America's history including our religious history. Marxism "has no place for God."
4. **"You saw this with the French Revolution. There was [an abhorrence] at the bottom of it of God, of any kind of authority. And these people are drunk with the idea that they can somehow be an authority themselves, they can seize power... If you really want to cut to the chase, you forget about [Confederate] generals and things. You go right for God, you go right for the Virgin Mary, my goodness, you go for churches."**
Eric Metaxas
5. FRENCH REVOLUTION - July 14, 1789: fueled by the Enlightenment, saying that man can have a utopian society, but God had to be kicked out. 20,000 priests were beheaded or driven out of France. Catholic church buildings became an altar for humanism. They want heaven on earth but without God.

III. SPIRITUAL BATTLE IN CALIFORNIA

A. NO SINGING: Silencing our weapon of warfare.

1. The July 6 Worship Guidance from Gov. Newsom stated unequivocally: **"Places of worship must therefore discontinue singing and chanting."** Unprecedented overreach. Satan knows that praise is a powerful weapon for spiritual warfare. We must keep singing, praying, and worshipping!

B. OUR GOVERNOR PUBLICLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY SUPPORTED MASS GATHERINGS FOR PROTEST WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY CONDEMNING AND PROHIBITING RELIGIOUS WORSHIP SERVICES.

1. On June 1, 2020, Governor Newsom held a news conference in which he expressed appreciation and gratitude for the thousands of protestors gathering in the streets in California in violation of his own Orders. (Gavin Newsom, *You are right to feel wronged:*

Newsom responds to weekend violence YouTube.com, June 1, 2020, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=va7rl5seIXQ>.)

2. In that press conference, the Governor explicitly encouraged the protestors to continue to flout his Order, stating: **“Those that want to express themselves and have, thank you! God bless you. Keep doing it.”** In other words, the Governor explicitly stated that he “thanks” the protestors for violating his Orders, thinks God will bless them for violating his Orders, and encouraged them to continue to flout his Orders.
3. When asked about the double standard and disparate treatment of family, religious, or social gatherings and the often-violent protests in California, Governor Newsom has issued public statements stating that **“people understand we have a Constitution, we have a right to free speech and we are all dealing with a moment in our Nation’s history that is profound and pronounced,”** and issued further expressions of praise for the protestors flouting his own Orders. (See Eric Ting, *Gavin Newsom asked to reconcile support for protests with new warnings on gatherings*, SFGate, July 2, 2020.)
4. On May 31, 2020, Governor Newsom released an official statement praising and encouraging the protestors in California to continue to gather in large numbers despite the flagrant violation of the Governor’s own Orders. Specifically, the Governor said: **“We have seen millions of people lift up their voices in anger, rightfully outraged... Every person who has raised their voice should be heard.”** He continued, **“I want to thank all those... who exercised their right to protest peacefully.”** (See Press Release, *Governor Newsom Statement of Demonstrations Across California and the Passing of Federal Officer*, May 31, 2020, available at <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/05/30/governor-newsom-statement-on-demonstrations-across-california-and-the-passing-of-federal-officer/>).
5. Our governor encouraged the protestors to raise their voices but mandates the churches not to sing. Where is our First Amendment rights?
6. On June 5, 2020, the Governor not only continued his support for mass protests that continually disregard his Orders, but he said new standards should be applied for such protests. He continued his encouragement of willful violations of his Orders by stating: **“Protestors have the right not to be harassed... Protestors have the right to protest peacefully. Protestors have the right to do so without being arrested.”** (See Alexi Koseff, *Newsom calls for new protest policing standards in California, ban on carotid holds*, San Francisco Chronicle, June 5, 2020.)
7. In many ways I agree with peaceful protests. It is our First Amendment right, but notably, the governor’s calls for First Amendment activity to be permitted without threat of arrest did not apply to religious gatherings!
8. On Sunday, June 7, 2020, protestors estimated at approximately 100,000 were permitted to gather in Hollywood with close proximity without any threat of criminal sanction for violating the Governor’s Orders:



(See Samuel Braslow, *Black Lives Matter Estimates that as Many as 100,000 Protestors Gathered in Hollywood on Sunday*, Los Angeles Magazine, June 8, 2020, available at <https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/hollywood-protest-sunday/>.)

9. You wonder why there was a spike in CA? I don't believe it was the businesses that opened up. The restaurants that Sue and I went to were very careful about social distancing. The same for my gym that opened up. And the Neihule's Salon, which is owned by one of our church members, has plexiglass between the workers. Everyone has been careful. I know that there has been more testing so the numbers are up. Is it possible that the spike is caused by the hundreds of thousands that gathered in protest?
10. **Reinhold Niebuhr said, "First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out — because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out — because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me — and there was no one left to speak for me."**
11. We will continue to have our in-house service as an act of "protest" of our First Amendment rights. But more importantly, as an act of spiritual warfare over our state and nation. We must take a stand.

CONCLUSION: I want to commission every one of you to speak out and take a stand for the truth of God's Word. We are taking a prophetic stand in the boldness, power, and love of God.