

Modern Wars and Genocides: Can Christians Do Anything About Them?

It seems like, at any given time, there are two or three wars or genocides going on somewhere in the world. It usually does not spread out to involve several nations at once but rather seems to be confined to one or two countries. Many of us remember the genocides that occurred in Africa in the twentieth century, which were caused by various wars. I remember the description of one attack on civilians: men, who were described as having demonic faces, were running around, wielding machetes, hacking off arms and legs and sometimes hacking people into pieces. At any rate, these trouble spots around the world seem to be limited in number to two or three at a time. They rage on for a few years, eventually calm down, then break out somewhere else in the world, but never more than a few at a time. It is almost like the “trouble spot” migrates from place to place.

Most of us have seen documentaries about World War II that tell us, among other things, of the genocides that occurred in Germany against various people groups, such as the Jews, Gypsies, Communists, believers in democracy, the retarded, and other groups. And we have heard national leaders declare that “never again” would this be tolerated. But “never again” actually means, never again, at least, not until the next one happens. And it does happen, over and over again, and the world usually does little about it (Ukraine being the exception). The leaders just change the definition, refusing to call widespread murders “genocides,” so that they do not have to do anything about them. As a result, the killing goes on.

At present, there are at least three such conflicts going on in the world and one that is about to burst forth: Ukraine, China, Myanmar (Burma), and Taiwan. We have all heard of the brutal invasion of Ukraine by Vladimir Putin’s Russia and the uncivilized behavior, even depravity, of its troops. Mass graves of civilians who have been killed, including women, children, and the aged, are being found. At the height of the attacks (as in June of 2022), about two hundred Ukrainian soldiers were dying every day trying to defend their homeland.

We are all in agreement that the concentration camps of the Nazis were degenerate and we have condemned them. But then, the same things are going on in Communist China, which is waging war on disfavored factions, such as the Uyghurs, Christians, and other minority groups. It is estimated that a million Uyghurs are now being held in concentration camps. There are reports of these people being executed on a regular basis, and even reports of their body parts being sold on the international markets. These human rights abuses are occasionally mentioned by free nations, but most continue on with business as usual, trading with China on a massive scale, enriching it, and enabling it to feed its military machine, which may, in the near future, surpass that of the United States. We know how a nation will treat other national populations by how it treats its own people: if it persecutes its own citizens, then it will do the same to the other countries that it conquers. China has recently taken control of Hong Kong and, characteristically, suppressed the freedoms of that population and arrested protesters. And now, China is on the verge of invading Taiwan, has been threatening other countries in the area as well, and has already had minor incursions at its border with India.

Though the news programs rarely mention them, human rights abuses are also going on in Myanmar, even though this does not involve one nation invading another. In this case, the government has been taken over by the military, which is being run by criminals. They do as

they please, take whatever they want, and kill whoever gets in their way. Millions have fled the country, lest they, too, become victims of this malignant government.

Looking back at Biblical history, we see many of the same things going on during those times. It seems as if countries took turns invading each other, conquering one another, killing off masses of people, and enslaving those who survived. Of course, some of these examples were justified, being prompted by God who was using them to judge one nation or another. But in other cases, it was just a case of greedy and megalomaniacal men who wanted to increase the size of their borders. In the conflicts mentioned in the Book of Daniel, it was suggested that Satanic spirits in high places were operating behind those evil kings:

Then he [the angel] said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. *The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, so I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia and came to make you understand what is to befall your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.*" (Dan. 10:12–14, RSV)

Then he [again, the angel] said, "Do you know why I have come to you? But now *I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I am through with him, lo, the prince of Greece will come.* But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince. And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him." (Dan. 10:20–11:1, RSV)

Darius the Mede was approved by God, being one of His instruments. Therefore, one of His angels was commissioned to support him. This same angel, along with Michael the Archangel, was in conflict with high spirits from other countries, such as those of Persia and Greece.

As we know, the New Testament itself acknowledges that our real struggle is against spirits in high places:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Eph. 6:12, KJV)

Thus, it is possible that the wars and genocides that happen from place to place are being instigated by evil spirits in these high places. Was there a wicked spirit operating and inspiring Adolph Hitler during World War II as he carried out his maniacal cruelties upon other people? Was there an evil spirit operating behind Joseph Stalin and the atrocities he committed, causing the deaths of millions? We could ask the same of Turkey concerning its genocide of the Christian Armenians. And what about Pol Pot of Cambodia and his mass murders, and Idi Amin of Uganda and his violent behavior? We could go on and on. It is true that we cannot go back and change the past, but what about the present and the future? Can the church do anything about these modern atrocities? Do we have the power to change them, to put an end to evil regimes and the killings that are now going on or are about to commence?

Jesus said, “No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder his house” (Mark 3:27). Of course, this was spoken in the context of the kingdom of Satan. We may not be able to bind Satan himself since his time has not yet come (Rev. 20), but we can bind his lesser rulers and drive them out of contested regions as the Apostle Paul suggested:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. (2 Cor. 10:3–4, KJV, with parentheses removed)

Though this statement is given in the context of the tearing down of obstacles to the knowledge of God, it is likely also applicable to *any* of the strongholds of the enemy.

And how do we tear down strongholds, such as those of spirits that are enthroned in heavenly places, which rule over wide regions (Col. 1:16; Rev. 2:13, 13:2, 16:10)? In Ephesians 6 (and elsewhere), the New Testament gives us a list of weapons available to believers, but the only one that can be used against these unseen entities is the one cited in verse 18—*prayer*. This is similar to what Jesus taught about how to break demonic strongholds inside people: “This kind cannot be driven out by anything *but prayer*” (Mark 9:29).

Yes, prayer is the answer. Major trouble spots, such as ones instigated by these evil spirits, will usually not be changed by one or two people praying about them. However, what if there are ten thousand people praying, or fifty thousand, or even a million? What would happen if all this prayer was directed at one or two key individuals who are directly responsible for causing these tragedies?

Most people do not have the time or self-discipline to take part in any prayer campaign. But what if they only had to pray one minute a day? When we think about it, there is actually precedence in scripture for a minuteman prayer campaign, or in this case, a minute-woman prayer campaign. Remember the parable of the widowed woman and the unjust judge, how she got her way by continually badgering the judge (Lk. 18:1–8)? She could not “bother” him when he was holding court or when he was at home. She probably caught him on the way to work. Everyday she there, waiting for him to show up. As he approached, he probably thought to himself, “Oh no, there’s that woman again! I wish she would just go away!” So, to save himself from being worn out, he finally granted her request. Relating this to prayer, one of the points being made here is that success could be dependent on frequency, not only on spending a lot of time in prayer. Though increased time would definitely help, if one cannot do that, as this woman could not, then frequency would carry the day. And if there had been a thousand widows pleading the same case with that judge, success would have come even sooner. So, there is precedence for conducting a prayer campaign based on spending a short amount of time in prayer, but doing it consistently every day. And if tens of thousands of people are praying about the same problem for just one minute a day, will not heaven respond in some way?

At present, are primarily speaking of the invasion of Ukraine by Vladimir Putin. Secondarily, this concerns the coming invasion of Taiwan by the Communist Chinese government of Xi Jinping. It is much easier to stop something before it gets started than it is to stop it once it has already begun. What would happen if thousands of people were praying against this one man, Chairman Xi? Could the invasion be averted? If change is in the realm of possibility, perhaps these could be our priorities:

- (1) Pray that God convert, change, or remove Putin from being the head of the Russian government.
- (2) Pray for the removal of the entire Putin regime from Russia and return it to democratic rule.
- (3) Pray that God convert, change, or remove Chairman Xi from being the head of the Chinese government.
- (4) Pray that God remove the communist government of China and move it to democratic rule.

But the reason for starting by concentrating on singular key leaders is that it is much easier to get one or two of them removed than it is to change an entire system of government of any particular country. The removal of one leader would be a start and may cause the others to reevaluate their plans if they see their leaders getting “picked off” one by one. They may hear of this campaign and suddenly get “cold feet” as the fear of God descends upon them. But as we know, the removal of one top leader might not change the course of the regime. That is why we also need to pray for a complete change in their systems of government from being authoritarian to being democratic.

Will a campaign like this work? It is likely that at least something will happen. But we owe it to the displaced Ukrainians whose land has been stolen by the Russians. We owe it to the dead Ukrainians who now rest in cold, mass graves. We owe it to the Burmese, the Taiwanese, and many others of present or future trouble spots to *at least try*. And it is not as if it would cost us some great sacrifice of money, property, or inconvenience. We lose nothing by trying, except only a little time and effort. The world may pay a greater price if we do nothing, and the danger could certainly not be limited to those few trouble spots—it could spread and eventually threaten all of us as well; the liberty of all free nations could be in jeopardy. So, can we not at least try this and see what happens? Can we not at least run an experiment?

How long will it take before we see any results happening? Something could happen soon, or it may take months. Remember that the angel that was sent to Daniel was held up by the “prince” of Persia for three weeks. So, we are certain to face spiritual opposition. We need to be able to persevere to give this campaign a reasonable chance of success, and reach whatever goal is set, be it for six months, one year, or whatever, and then perhaps set new goals as old ones are met.

So, the basic question is, can we take part in the relief of mass human suffering; do we have the power; can we make changes? We know the Biblical answer: we *can* put a stop to these things; we *can* influence the course of history. The prophets of Israel have done this many times. We do not have to sit around and think, “Oh well, there is nothing I can do about these problems.” We do not have to shrink back and sink into feelings of powerlessness. Nor do we have to travel overseas, such as to Ukraine, pick up a rifle, and join the fighting. What we *can* do, and what can be done anywhere we are and at any time, is that we can just pray!

The fact is, we really can be part of that Big Hand that is able to reach behind enemy lines, that can reach behind defensive perimeters, that can reach into governmental headquarters and high-security centers. Once moved by prayer, that Big Hand, wielding a big stick, can muck up things and cause chaos in a regime or even bring it to an end.

It is time for the church, this sleeping giant, to rise up and begin to exert its godly and powerful influence over the evil hot spots that are in the world today. If we work toward a common goal, we can put a stop to these reprehensible atrocities!

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The most recent reports of the war in Ukraine is that the Ukrainians are having unexpected success in their counter offensives and are gaining ground while Russian troops are retreating. Some Russian leaders are calling for Vladimir Putin to either fully mobilize the country for war or pull out of Ukraine altogether. A few others are calling him to resign. Even if these latter politicians are able to force him out of office, we do not know if another Putin-like leader will take over, like Dmitry Medvedev, or will the country revert to being a true Democratic state. Thus, this is a critical period in Russian politics. Now is the time to lift our voices to God and hope for a successful change in their form of government.