

# Politics for the Citizens of Heaven

## A Christian Perspective on Political Involvement

The United States of America is experiencing a presidential election unlike any in recent memory and Christians are responding in vastly different ways. Some plan to take a strict partisan approach and vote for their party's candidate no matter what their candidate does or says. Others plan to abandon their party this time around and either abstain from voting or vote for a third-party candidate. Some are very excited about supporting one of the candidates, while others find this election all about choosing the lesser of the evils. How can we think biblically about this and all elections?

I'm grateful to have been born in the United States of America and I plan to enjoy the freedoms I have here for as long as God allows. I don't publicly endorse candidates or political parties, but as a private citizen, I honor my stewardship responsibility to cast a vote for those who will represent me. I strive to let God's Word guide and inform all my decisions, including my vote. I want to provide some insight to help you think biblically about politics and political involvement.

How should Christians respond and react to politics? What do the apostles mean when they tell us to live in quietness (1 Timothy 2:1–2), to be submissive to rulers and authorities (Titus 3:1), and to be subject to every human institution, including the emperor and governors (1 Peter 2:13–14)? What does Paul mean when he writes:

“Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.” (Romans 13:1-4)

**Here are four biblical, timeless truths that are applicable from the 1<sup>st</sup> Century to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

**1. The Christian is to obey every ordinance of government, in so far as it does not require him to abandon his conscience, his worship of God, or his obedience to Scripture.**

This principle doesn't always make sense to us. When God saves us, he makes us citizens of a new kingdom. Therefore, it only seems logical that we can abandon the city of man and refuse to obey or even participate in this culture. However, the Bible says the exact opposite. In Romans 13, Paul told believers to pay taxes, provide honor where it is due, and follow the customs of the land, in so far as they do not demand a violation of God's command. This means we are to obey the laws of our government . . . even when we don't like them.

**2. A moral government is not necessary for the Church to fulfill its mission.**

If a moral government were necessary for the Church to be fruitful, we would expect the apostles to instruct the Church on the importance of solidifying a Christian voting bloc to bring moral parameters to bear in society. The Bible never states the importance of moral public officials, rulers, and magistrates in order for the Church to be successful. Instead, we discover the opposite challenge. Erwin Lutzer puts it like this: “Our nation needs an antidote that is far more radical than politics could ever be. Our so-called culture war is really a spiritual war. Our problems are not fundamentally abortion, trash television, and homosexual values. The root of cultural decay is first and foremost spiritual; we must attack the *root* of this corrupt tree. Our greatest challenge is theological, not political and cultural.”

### **3. The mission of the Church is not moral reformation, but spiritual transformation.**

Since a moral government is not necessary for a thriving church, then it is illogical and unproductive for the Church to focus on moral reformation. It is not the business of the Church or the Christian to keep our culture from plunging into wickedness. Our mission is not to make bad people act good. The nicest, kindest, most moral person you know can go to hell just as the most reprobate. This doesn't mean that we don't care about morality. We do, however, choose to pursue change one disciple at a time. That change begins in the heart and manifests itself in action. The mission of the Church is to be salt and light, so that the world might see our good works and glorify God. Our mission is spiritual reformation. We strike at the root of the problem, not at its symptoms.

### **4. Our mandate on Earth is not to save our Nation, but to bring individuals from this and every nation to salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone.**

Since our goal is spiritual reformation, it extends well beyond our Nation's borders. Our mission is wrapped up in our charge—the proclamation of the gospel. Only in the gospel do we find life-changing, society-changing and world-changing power. To swap our gospel for political activism and the thinking that the government will become the ally of the Church and adopt Christian morals is to imply that the gospel is not powerful enough, fast enough, or good enough. More importantly, it neglects our mission and ultimately distorts the gospel.

Friends, we have a message that only we as Christians can deliver. It must be heard above the noise of political posturing and power. We have an agenda that is divinely inspired. It is more important than saving America. It is holding the cross of Jesus Christ high so that God might be pleased to save Americans.

### **Now let me address several practical considerations:**

#### **Should Christians vote?**

Enjoying the benefits of a free society requires a sense of responsibility to serve and act as a good citizen. Exercising the privileges of a free society should be used to our advantage whenever possible. So vote. But vote intelligently. In order to vote for the best candidate, carefully gather all the information available. Take heed to consider the sources. Examine voter guides, internet research and other sources of public record concerning the candidate's position, views, and voting record. You may find that all of the candidates are immoral and anti-God. In that case, you might have to vote for the "lesser evil." As you vote, remember that the heart of the king is in the hand of God (Proverbs 21:1), and God is sovereign over every decision, judgment, and policy.

#### **Should Christians serve in the political arena?**

The political arena is a wonderful place for committed Christians to shine for God's glory. In the Old Testament, several key individuals, including Nehemiah and Daniel, served their political leaders with dignity and godliness. Daniel so effectively shone as a light in the darkness that two of the kings he served placed their faith in God. In any profession, although Christians should be careful not to pursue any profession that requires us to leave our testimony outside the front door, we should be salt and light. Wherever God leads us, we should create thirst for the truth of Scripture, and our testimony should inhibit the rapid social and cultural decay around us. By our character, we can expose the deeds of darkness and shine the light of Christ's beauty into the longing eyes of blinded people. Politicians with a testimony for holy living and biblical thinking are rare—but greatly appreciated as they stand for the truth of God's Word.

## **Should the Christian make a political gesture and boycott companies and products promoting sinful activities?**

Certainly, an industry that directly practices immorality should be avoided, such as casinos or strip clubs. The greater difficulty lies in boycotting companies that indirectly promote sinful behavior. My opinion is that Christians should refuse to subsidize direct involvement with any sinful behavior. As it relates to indirect subsidy, I merely applaud any Christian who tries to be consistent with their lives. On the other hand, I am concerned when Christians publicly boycott a company, store, or product that only has indirect involvement with sinful issues because the action is often misunderstood by the unbelieving world. The perception could be that we care more about sinful behavior than we do about individual souls. We must be careful not to place more importance on social and cultural concerns than spiritual concerns. Our greatest concern must revolve around the world hearing the gospel, not an attempt to make unbelieving men stop sinning.

## **Is it ever right to speak out on issues we find offensive?**

Absolutely! John Knox of Scotland dared to challenge Queen Mary and helped influence its Protestant conversion. Long before Knox, John the Baptist took a stand and challenged Herod for his immorality (Mark 6:18). My cautionary advice is to be intentionally mindful of the context of your comments. We may clearly share our grief over an issue, but we must share why it is grievous to us. When Christians address morally offensive issues, we must make it clear that we are speaking up because the acts of sin are dishonorable to our true and living God. We speak because those acts slander the glory of God in His creation.

This is the context of our offense over moral depravity. If we merely speak of our offenses, the world will view us as any other voter who isn't happy when things don't go his way. But if our comments are attached to a kind, clear message of the gospel, God's work will be advanced. We are not called by God to curse the darkness. We are called to simply shine...and the darker our culture, the brighter our light.

## **Does America's moral decline mean God has abandoned us?**

The invitation of the gospel is to people of every nation. Americans are not God's "people," nor is this country under some special covenant with God. Our mission is not to save America, but to save Americans—that is, to share the gospel of grace to people who need deliverance. God hasn't abandoned America any more than He abandoned the land of the Ninevites. At the very height of their immorality and wickedness, God had plans for them through a prophet by the name of Jonah. Today, the invitation of the gospel is for everyone—and certainly this nation of people. According to Scripture, the invitation is still open as we live in the final days of "whosoever will, may come."

If you'd like a more detailed answer on this subject, stop by our Bookstore at CBC and pick up a copy of, *I Pledge Allegiance: Politics for the Citizens of Heaven*. You can also order a copy online at [www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)

From the Bible Teaching Ministry of:

**STEPHEN DAVEY**  
*PASTOR/TEACHER*