

ON SELECTING THOSE WHO SHALL REPRESENT US
RUS WALTON, APRIL, 1980

"Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers over hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers often." Ex 18:21

Christians are not second-class citizens. When we accept Christ as our Lord and Master, we are not relieved of our duties or excluded from our rights as citizens of this nation.

As the Apostle Paul wrote, we take on a dual citizenship (Phil 3:20). We become members of a society totally different and apart from the civil State. We become citizens of a kingdom not of this world. Yet, as God has ordained, we continue to invoke civil authority to uphold our physical liberty and to secure our public safety (Rom 13:6,7). Thus, we must properly share in the responsibility of maintaining a public order in which we may be free to worship God, to serve Him, and to propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mt 28:19,20)¹.

Our citizenship duties are important to both our Christian witness and our physical well-being. Our responsibilities to participate in the selection of those who will represent us in civil government take on added significance. While some may concern themselves only with civil liberty, Christians must seek both religious (spiritual) and civil (physical) freedom.

History testifies that when Christians neglect such governmental responsibilities, those who deny God fill the public void and invade the private domain. To paraphrase the Christian statesman, Edmund Burke, the penalty the godly pay for doing nothing is to be ruled by the ungodly.

"It is true that you cannot legislate evil out of the world, but by an impartial, rigorous justice you can make it too costly to practice... and by wise and Christian legislation you may limit its reach and remove its temptations and for this, in its most perfect measure, and to our utmost ability, the God of righteousness holds every man responsible.

What our country needs in its leaders and legislators are the purest Christian principles, the loftiest personal character, the highest and most unselfish political aims; that they may be men who no gold can buy, no adulation of the people can mislead, and no spirit of ambition can pervert." (Rev. S.W. Foljambe, 1876)

Who but the godly will seek to elect such men to public office? And, is that not properly part of the Christian's task for Him?

¹ Let those who would deny the Christian's concern or responsibility in civil matters look to the lot of Believers under governments where liberty is denied. Let them realize the obstacles such systems place in the path of those who seek to fulfill Christ's Great Commission.

THE LORD GOD has provided us with rules and criteria to employ in the selection, support and election of those who are to represent us in civil government. These have been too often ignored or flaunted in the past; now we reap the evil fruitage. If we continue to fail our God in this regard, the coming harvest may be even more bitter.

Consider these guidelines set forth in The Bible. We are to select for public office ...

- Men who "love righteousness and hate iniquity; men of truth" (Ex 18:21) - Since men act according to the principles which govern their hearts, an unrighteous man will be an unrighteous ruler - Ps 25:28
- Men who are known to us (Deut 17:15); men who are known to be wise in the fear of The Lord (Ex 18:21) - We are not to support ungodly men; we are not to place our trust in men we do not know. Before we give our support and cast our lot, we are to take time to inform ourselves fully.
- Men who are able; men who respect God; men who hate covetousness (Ex 18:21) - The need is for men with clear minds and stout hearts; men conscientious in their desire to serve God and their constituents; men of integrity who cannot be bought and who will not take the property of one to solicit favors from another.
- Men who respect truth rather than the prestige of persons or the power of pressure groups - Men who will take the time to study the issues, measure them by the word of God, and be resolute in the application of the law. Since those in authority are to be God's ministers (Rom 13:4), they are to represent Him faithfully (Ps 75:10)
- Men who will not be swayed by flattery or moved by bribery (Deut 16:19) - Men who will not be turned from their duty by smooth talk or silver coin; men who will stand fast on the word of God.
- Men who will put the best interests of the people above personal, private or special interests (Deut 17:17; Lev 19:15) - "He who either to advance himself, or to be revenged on another, will push injurious laws, or pervert the true intent of such as are in force, is ... under the influence of a narrow spirit" and not worthy of the public trust or safe to be given power.
- Men who are impartial; men who seek justice (Deut 16:18)². And, what is justice? Justice is not hyphenated, it cannot be considered apart from obedience to God; it must be 'influenced and maintained' by adherence to God's laws.

WE MAY PROPERLY employ the Biblical requirements that deal with ecclesiastical government as guides in much of civil government; the Christian methodology of government embraces both church and civil polity. There is great guidance to be found in the study of 1 Tim 3:1-13 as we seek to choose those who will represent us. Consider these qualifications:

² For greater development of these points, see 'The Character of a Good Ruler,' Rev. Samuel Willard, 1694; The Christian History of the Constitution of the United States, Vol. 1, page 396-7, Foundation for American Christian Education – www.face.net.

1. They must be blameless, without scandal in personal or public life. They must be on guard against the wiles of Satan and the ways of this world; temperate in their actions; honest and direct, not given to frothy statements or ambiguous posturing; not double-minded or lukewarm. They should be willing to communicate their knowledge of the Gospel and the Biblical principles of government (v 2).
2. They should be firm in their beliefs, knowledgeable in their positions; but not mean or quarrelsome. As they are not to strike with their hands so they are not to brawl with their tongues; they are to be ambassadors for Christ. They must not be covetous, knowing that covetousness is a sin in any circumstance but even more grievous in one who is charged with being a public servant (v 3).
3. They must govern themselves and their households well. The manner in which they control themselves and their families indicates the manner in which they will handle the affairs of office (including the way in which they appoint and administer their staffs). The personal habits and private lives of those who would seek public office is very much a matter of close examination by Christian voters (v 4,5).
4. They should be persons of experience, of sound judgment and purpose. Just as a minister must know God's word and the workings of Christ's church, so the public servant (who is also a minister of God) should know God's word and the Biblical principles and purposes of civil government. The more knowledgeable an officeholder is of the principles and purposes of government, the less susceptible he will be to false pride (keeping in mind that vanity — the great snare of politics — was the sin that turned angels into devils) (v 6,7).

FINALLY, BECAUSE WE are His, we are to seek to do all things so that they will be pleasing in His sight. Thus, decisions relating to public officeholders are to be approached with prayer for His guidance and direction (Pr 3:6). We are told to pray for those in authority (1 Tim 2:2) and such de facto prayer is vital as we seek to construct a godly nation. But, prayer before the fact of election is also important so that men acceptable unto God are selected for positions of power (Deut. 17:15).

We are to be discerning; not taken in by calculated words or slick slogans. We are to “try the spirits whether they be of God” (1John 4:1) lest we be led astray by demagogues. There are “many false prophets gone out into the world” — even into the world of politics.

Consider Christ's parable of the two sons (Mt 21:28-31). When the father told the first son to go work in the vineyard, that son answered, ‘I will not.’ But, he repented and went. The second son, by contrast, was quick to reply to his father, ‘I will go, sir.’ But he went not. Both sons were at fault but, as Jesus asked, “which of the twain did the will of his father?”

Consider now this parable, patterned after The Lord's. There were two men seeking public office. The first man did not profess to follow Christ, yet in his personal life and in his public affairs he sought to be a godly person. He voted against federal funding of abortions; he opposed special rights for homosexuals and refused to cave-in to those who pressured him on ‘gay rights;’ he called for strict controls of obscenity and pornography; he stood against the

political and economic and cultural cohabitation of this nation with Russia (aka the Soviet Union); he insisted the federal government once again observe the Tenth Amendment, and he was strongly pro-family — contending against those who sought government intervention in the rights and responsibilities of parents.

Now, the second man was quick to proclaim his "rebirth in Christ." He often sought invitations to preach from the pulpit. Yet, examine his record: he pushed for federal funding of abortions; he (and his wife) strongly supported the ERA; he urged the U.S. to enter into covenants with the Soviets, he promoted one world global government, and he was among those who campaigned for increased federal intrusion and control of the affairs of the family.

Which of the two was pleasing to The Lord? Which served God the more?

Let us not be deceived. Not everyone who cries 'Lord, Lord!' is faithful to Him (Mt 7:21-23). There are many who say, and do not man's words be sweet but his works bitter. Words are but buds that promise; it is the deed that is the fruit. *And, it is by their fruits that we shall know them (Mt 7:16).*

Note from the editor – though the ideal is set forth in this newsletter from which we should discern how to vote, we often live in cultures where we view all our choices as “the lesser of two evils” since so few come close to the biblical standard. However, *we must never allow the idolatry of the perfect to be the enemy of the best.* Consider instead voting for “the best individual” whose conduct and record (as illustrated above), comes the closest to the Biblical standard. To omit to vote often allows the worst candidate to enhance evil. After all, ultimately, we express our conscience before God when we vote, for we are to *strive to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men (Acts 24:16).* Our trust is that He is Sovereign!

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