

Autumn 2024

The Heartbeat of



The Remnant

A ministry of
The Berean Voice

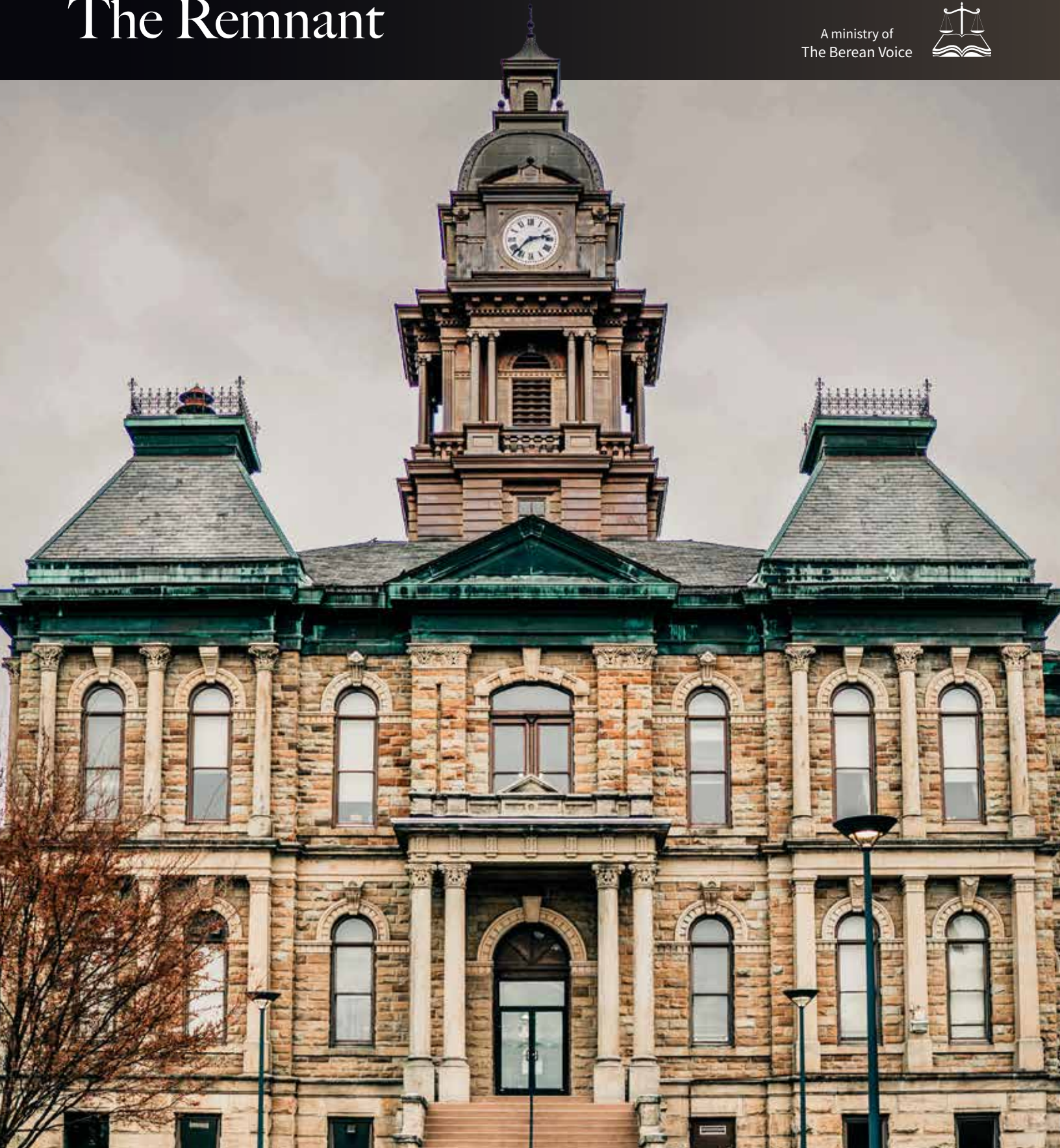


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Purpose Statement

The Berean Voice is an outreach ministry of Faith Christian Fellowship, located in Holmes County, Ohio. It is operated by a board of directors, which ultimately answer to the elders of the church.

As a non-profit ministry, we desire to work with the Lord, for without Him we can do nothing. We are trusting God to provide for the ongoing work of this magazine and our other outreach projects through the free-will offerings of His people. Would you join us in prayer for this work and ongoing need?

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It is our goal that the content of this magazine bring honor and glory to God. All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted. In the event of discovering any errors in content or detail, please count it to our oversight and kindly bring it to our attention.

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From the EDITOR



Left or right, red or blue, liberal or conservative, fiscal accountability or social policies, Republican or Democrat? Every four years, as the strength of summer draws to a close and autumn puts on its glorious display, we are inundated with political activism. Yard signs, radio commercials while shopping at Walmart, newspaper and digital ads, and robocalls all demand our attention. Depending on where you live or might be working, you may encounter a politician running for office. Sixteen years ago, while still living in Iowa, I was working on a remodel job in town when I noticed a marked increase in traffic. Law enforcement officers and political banners were everywhere. I learned a man campaigning in the primaries for the office of the presidency was to speak just two blocks away. My curiosity got the best of me. I unbuckled my toolbelt so I would make it through the checkpoint. I'm going to see what this is all about and what this man has to say. Making my way past the mob of political workers who were offering me a hat and T-shirt, trying to register me to vote or at least take a bumper sticker, I settled in to hear the pitch. If my values were of this world's system, I would still be sad today that the candidate didn't make it to office. If we only would have voted for him, taxes would be low, food and gas would be cheap, our schools would be thriving, and the economy would be booming. We would be as close to heaven on earth as we could get. As so, the cycle continues every four years.

We devoted most of this issue of The Heartbeat of the Remnant to values that our fathers and forefathers held dear. Values such as non-resistance, separation of church and state, non-participation of government, and the two-kingdom principle. But today, these values are under assault. Contemporary Christianity preaches across their pulpits that voting is a moral obligation of all Christians. We must be politically involved to fight against evil. And if we are politically involved, then we should also defend our country. The same flag that is hung over the voting booth is carried onto the battlefield. Their arguments sound quite convincing.

I invite you to read through the articles in this issue that bring a Biblical perspective on these issues. Here are some quotes from the writers:

"But the kingdom of Jesus Christ doesn't force its way. The kingdom of light pulls, drawing men to it, while the kingdoms of this world push, forcing people to submit. Jesus came to attract, not attack!"

"The country of America, as great as it may be, will never be able to live for God. It will live for itself, protect itself, and live like unregenerate men live. Will we, as God's people, accept this separation?"

"The Christian's power does not come from the state. Christians have received power through the Holy Ghost by Jesus Christ himself."

"When any group or nation upholds Bible principles, God can bless it. But because a nation is a worldly thing, a part of this world's kingdom, it cannot be a godly thing."


"The political process is poorly equipped to change hearts. That is the calling of the Christians. Jesus changes hearts, and our calling is to be a ministry of reconciliation – reconciling the world to Christ through the new birth and a changed life."

I believe the last quote sums it all up. Political involvement is simply not the Christian's calling. In a few years, it won't matter who the president is. C.T. Studds says it well about what does matter:

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last."

This reminder is fresh on the minds of our family. On September 23, we laid my mother-in-law to rest. After a long battle with Parkinson's disease, she finally went on to her reward. My wife and I now have laid both our parents to rest. In their lifetimes, 15 presidents have come and gone. One more is about to leave office. None of those presidencies matter to them anymore. All that matters is that they are in the presence of the King of kings. And that is all that should matter to us as well. We may consistently vote the right president into office. But if we find ourselves standing before the wrong king in the life to come, our entire life and all its endeavors will have been a wasted effort.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the King of kings,


Edward Martin

Freedom in Christ

Lee Rufener

Athens, Wisconsin

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1)

There is much ado in our land about freedom. It has been a central and foundational theme for centuries. America is touted as the land of the free and the home of the brave, and many have shed their blood in the pursuit and defense of it. We all deeply appreciate the freedom we possess. Most of us can walk outside without fear of being molested. We are free to worship at the place of our preference and in the manner we choose. We can speak and publish what we will without repercussion. This is legislated freedom at its finest, and we can hardly comprehend life without it.

Countless hardships have been endured in the quest for freedom. Miracles have been occasioned by the scores as souls have risked their lives in pursuit of it. From Jesus walking through the midst of His assailants and Peter's angelic deliverance from prison, to the escape of Paul being let down over the wall in a basket, we are all enraptured by the accounts of successful deliverance from evil men. This century has, perhaps, produced more books than ever published concerning the freeing of Christians from tyranny. In spite of the supernatural involvement of angels and divine intervention, this type of emancipation has nothing to do with the freedom we have in Christ.

A recent exchange in a hospital room with an elderly Ukrainian man who came to America after spending time in a communist concentration camp reveals the truth. As he waited for the life support machine to be turned off on his dying grandson, great lament filled his soul. Upon landing on the shores of a free nation, he witnessed the ebbing away of faith in the lives of his offspring, and now his grandson had embarked upon a Christ-less eternity. "I wish that I hadn't come." escaped from the lips of the tear-stained face. As he stands upon the vantage of hindsight, the freedom he once valued paled in the light of the yoke of bondage that has gripped his offspring. Perhaps Lot shared the same regret as the former decision toward

lifestyle and financial freedom now danced before his mind in maddening mockery. Yesterday it was his godless, heathen neighbors of Sodom that vexed his righteous soul, but now in his final years, he must face the fact that it was his own ill-advised pursuit of freedom that birthed the heathen nations of Moab and Ammon.

The book of Galatians has been likened to the Christian's "Declaration of Independence" and was known as the battle cry of the Reformation. A brief study of the letter will reveal that Paul was adamant that these Galatians stand fast in the liberty of Christ. This is one of the few epistles that has no commendation but only pointed correction. He bears no qualms about calling their current understanding "another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." (Gal 1:6-7) Christianity is not just another Jewish sect, and this letter distinctly unties the reader from any of the Jewish ordinances. Galatians speaks of important issues: law, grace, works, the gospel, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, our Lord's death, His resurrection, salvation, and sanctification. These critical realities are all on board in Paul's agenda, but the primary message portrayed throughout its verses is freedom. About twenty times in these six chapters we will come across some form of the word "bondage" or "freedom". However freedom can represent many facets. Freedom from hell, spiritual bondage, judgment, or the Jewish law all rise to the surface of our interpretation. Whatever our persuasion, the believer must duly recognize that the freedom offered by Christ is of spiritual dimension rather than physical. While this freedom is very personal, scripture gives us no claim to our own agenda and no roots to hold title to this world's charms.

People have grown accustomed to thinking, saying, hearing, and doing whatever they want. This is freedom, but not that which is offered by Christ. "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." (2 Peter 2:19) In a land largely free of

human coercion, we still find a vast majority of its citizens are enslaved in spiritual bondage. They are free to select the master of their choice but choose to remain chained to their sin. The Judaizers were legalistic and believed that freedom was wrought by keeping the Sabbath laws, practicing circumcision, and such. Others say freedom is found in being bound by no law at all. Even works are accounted evil under this paradigm. Still, others insist that rigorous asceticism and self-denial are the key to real freedom.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:32-36) The truth will not give you the right to vote, say what you want, or live independently. Nor will it exempt you from circumstances that distress, trouble, or frighten you. That is the ministration of this world's freedom. There is no slave who cannot own the full inner liberty offered by Christ. Thus, we are not bound by what others do to us or what offends our personal rights but rather by how we respond in our hearts. Christian freedom enables us to relate to our dire situations with mature faith. Christian faith interprets life. A person must simply look at their station in life and receive both the positive and negative experiences in the light of Christ, and he is free.

If true freedom is available to reach within the recesses of each and every heart, then it must be secured by inner operations. If we have failed to secure it, the fault lies solely within our own ranking. We are the problem, and we will never be free until we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. (Rom 12:2) While there are external yokes that can steal our inner freedom, the vast majority of them have pitched their baleful tents within our hearts and have driven their stakes pretty deep. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man." (Matt 15:19-20) Evil thoughts seem to be the engine that drags these sin-laden boxcars down the tracks of life. It is these same evil thoughts that many have little concern about their presence in our minds. We know a murderous thought is wrong, but frustration seems acceptable. Theft may not be tolerated but coveting is normal. Fornication is evil, but discontentment is expected, at times. No, the mind is the seedbed for all kinds of evil, and until it is fully converted, we will be continually plagued with the effects of bondage. But Christ has no intention to leave our cognitive thoughts untouched, and thus the Great Emancipator offers freedom from the yokes of bondage unto slavery. These arise as the cruel taskmasters of our minds in the form of ...

I. Exaggeration

When we think something will "always happen that way" or "never happen," we begin to form patterns of belief in our mind. We recognize that lying is wrong, but it begins as a more palatable thought pattern. No matter that the thought bears some truth and is "user-friendly", it still tends to bondage. To meditate upon the phrase, "The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies" (Titus 1:12) will leave us handicapped and uncharitable when we meet an honest Cretian. Elisha meditated long and complete upon the atrocities performed by Ahab and Jezebel, to the point that he believed that he was the only one left. Apart from the 7000 souls he overlooked and slighted, the major damage was done to his own spirit.

II. Evil Surmising

People about us have enough evil attached to their character without the need for us to add more to their account. "Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour..." (Zec 8:16-17) There is a subtle carnality that arrives on the doorstep of those who give themselves over to negative thoughts of others. "How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ... they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly." (Ps 62:3-4) Here, again, is the bondage wrought to the negative mindset. Ahab hated Micaiah. But this hatred rode in on the thought that "he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." (1Kings 22:8)

III. Worry

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow:" (Matt 6:34) Worry is akin to fortune telling, although the latter is, in a sense, more accurate, for seers predict both good and evil. Those given to worrisome thoughts predict the worst possible outcome of a situation. These troublesome thoughts are driven by feelings, oftentimes becoming a trail of self-filled prophecy. Feelings are very complex and are often based on memories of the past. When an unpleasant occurrence has not been properly placed under God's sovereignty in our minds, we become watchdogs (or worry warts) to ascertain that it never happens again. But we, by taking thought (anxiety) can never add one cubit to our stature. (Luke 12:25) In fact, those given to much worry shorten their life span drastically. "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind." (Luke 12:29) The doubtful mind is a glaring emblem of unbelief.

IV. Fear

We speak not of reverential fear, but of phobos¹, meaning alarm or fright. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." (1Jn 4:18) Phobia is

not a helpful emotion. Fear walks hand in hand with failure and causes us to respond in ways we do not want to. The children of Israel feared to enter into the promised land and viewed themselves as grasshoppers compared to the inhabitants thereof. So the future looms rather formidable in the eyes of those who entertain fearful thoughts. In the last days, men's hearts shall "fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." (Luke 21:26)

V. Condemnation

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:17) Perhaps condemnation has its purpose in the lives of an unbeliever so that he may be moved to repentance, but some continue to attach every innocuous event to their own fault. The event is long over, but they continue to lament what they could have done differently. To recognize our errors is noble and the vast majority can hardly ever admit a mistake of their own making. Yet, there are others who live under the cloud of what they should do or should have done. The guilt connected with such thoughts often creates an inner turbulence that further cripples us to accomplish a noble agenda.

VI. Blame

Blame is the diametric ditch from condemnation. Negative thoughts heap blame upon others. The basis for such thinking is that God is an "austere man" and is on constant vigil to reprimand every disobedient act. If something ill happens, a scapegoat must be found to attach it to. Christ's disciples "asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (John 9:2-3) When we attach blame for our troubles to something or someone, we become a victim of circumstances and are disabled to change the situation. Many relationships experience ruin. Not by the tragedy of the situation but by the blame cast on others. Whenever we believe that someone else is the source of our problem, we become powerless to reciprocate anything good, and the grace in our own hearts is stanchied.

VII. Judgment

It is our pride and prejudice that love to affix a label to every person or situation we don't fully understand. "The scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" (Matt 9:3-4) Most of us judge with our feelings. We may piously attach some scripture to our conclusion, but most of our discernment is because we are "partial in ourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts." (James 2:4) Even if we recognize the mind-reading error and only judge by what was said, we are instructed to "take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee: for oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others." (Ecc. 7:21-22) An honest appraisal of self will go a long way to stop negative judgments. David was guilty of murder and thus declared the death sentence against the man who killed his neighbor's lamb. Unfortunately, much of our inner judgment is likewise tainted by our preferences rather than true, honest concerns.

VIII. Ingratitude

Unthankfulness has successfully driven many men to despair. It inevitably drove the prodigal son from his home, occasioned the death of Naboth, and led David into lust for the wife of Uriah. These had been given much "and if that had been too little, I (God) would moreover have given unto thee such and such things." (2Sam 12:8) Ungrateful thoughts do not meditate upon what we have, but of what we are deprived. No matter how good we have it, the expectation in our minds lifts the standard of happiness higher. The farmer must have bigger barns, the businessman pursues more money, the married man lusts for another woman, and the married woman is wanton for better surroundings. Each believes that happiness lies just over the next horizon, and each lives in bondage to their never-ending desires. But those whom Christ has set free have before them a continual feast regardless of their circumstances. They are free indeed.

¹ Strong's Concordance, #5401



LITTLE DAVY GOES TO SCHOOL

David Leid
Big Prairie, Ohio

Although he would not readily admit it, Little Davy enjoyed school. He loved whizzing through his lessons in no time, at all. The red brick school where Davy attended was small. There was only one classroom and one teacher. The school had a big bell on the rooftop that rang each morning when it was time for school to start.

There was only one other boy in Davy's grade. He was a blond-haired Amish boy named Christ. Christ was pronounced with a short "I". Christ was the next to the youngest of eight Zook brothers. Their father liked to joke that he had two bushels of boys since four pecks make a bushel.

One day, Davy noticed it took Christ extra long to do his school work, especially his math. Christ sat at the desk directly behind Davy. "Since Christ is so slow it would be fun to time him," Davy schemed. The next morning, Davy

started timing Christ during math class. Davy quickly finished his math in record time, then continued looking at the clock until Christ was finished. "It took Christ exactly twice as long as it took me," Davy smirked to himself. "I thought he was a slow poke, and now I have proven it, fair and square."

When Christ was finished with his math, it was time for recess. All the boys hurried to the ball diamond, even Christ. Christ was first up to bat and hit the ball good and hard. It sailed over the other boys' heads. Going as fast as his short legs could carry him, Christ raced around all three bases and back to home base before the ball had even returned to shortstop. It was not Davy's turn to bat until it was almost time for the bell to ring to end recess. After one nipper and a foul ball, Davy was determined to make the most out of his very last chance. He swung the bat with all the might his thin arms could muster.

Unfortunately, the ball was a bit high, and instead of a reassuring crack, there was nothing except a dull thud when the missed ball hit the catcher's glove. The bell mournfully dulled out the sad truth, Little Davy had struck out!

After recess, it was time to grade the math papers. As usual, Davy and Christ traded papers and checked each other's work while Teacher Eleanor read out the correct answers. Who do you suppose had the most correct, Christ or Davy? Yes, it was Christ! Davy suddenly realized this was not a race to see who could finish first. He was beaten by his own game. The score that was being kept was who had the most correct. He was not the smartest in the class, after all. Thankfully, he did learn a valuable lesson that day that served him well throughout his life. If it is important enough to do it, it is well worth the time to double-check and make sure you do it right. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (2 Timothy 2:15).



Resist Not

Barry Grant

Shelbyville, Indiana

“I will not fight; I am a Christian”. We live in a world geared towards personal gain and satisfaction. Building a nice life for yourself is the American dream, and anyone who wants it can have it. Jesus says that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The question is then asked of us: when our great possessions or our nice lives are threatened, will we defend them? Will we resist?

The Bible is very clear on this. Jesus Himself could have called legions of angels to defend Him in the garden. Jesus could have easily resisted the evil that night—it would have saved His life—however, He did not. He opened not His mouth and was slain by evil men. However, it seems that some who profess to be Christians today do not see it the same and are not as quick to allow someone to take all that they have, including their life. Why is that? Could it be our mindset? I believe if we are truly living a separate life—separate from this world’s system and separate from this world’s standards and politics—we will have little trouble to “resist not evil”. However, the opposite can also be true. If we are involved in this world’s system, if we are involved in its politics and basking in the freedoms of our land, it will be very difficult to “resist not”.

Jesus said that if His people were part of this world, then they would fight. It’s a simple truth. If you are of this world, you will fight. If you are part of God’s kingdom, you will not fight.

Years ago, while I was in training at Marine boot camp, I was quickly taught the Marines’ order of priorities: God, country, and corps. I found it interesting that they put God first on their list. We then marched in rhythm to the chant. “What makes the grass grow? Blood, blood!” From its start, this country has always said that they put God first. However, it is clear from its actions that God was not actually first. Freedoms are placed first, and if those freedoms are threatened, everything about God is forgotten, and they turn to their highly trained military to defend

those freedoms. God ordained that the world should operate this way, but how should the Kingdom of God work? Are we as Christians also standing by our rights? The truth is, if we lift high our rights, then we also will fight for them!

Revenge is seen everywhere we turn. People still feel the pain from an attack that happened over 20 years ago and declare that this country will not back down. Billboards scream revenge as the lawyers of our land demand people defend their rights and freedoms, accidents are countered with life-changing lawsuits. People are told they will have peace once the price has been paid.

A stand-your-ground law is sweeping the nation, giving civilians the right to shoot anyone who seems to be a threat to their safety. Sales of concealed carry permits have soared as men and women right around us prepare in case someone attempts to infringe on their “God-given rights”.

Jesus taught us to lay down our lives, and then He showed us how to do it.

When talking about non-resistance, people always ask the same question, “So, if someone breaks into your house to harm your family, you wouldn’t do anything?” More and more Christians are stumped by this question. However, as followers of Jesus, we know that resisting is far from the answer.

Recently, I stopped by my neighbor’s place to chat. He is into politics and lives in fear. He asked me if I had any guns, and informed me that I was going to need them. After asking him why, he told me that it wouldn’t be long before city folks started coming around raiding our farms. I then asked him what he would do with a gun. In shock at my foolish question, he told me that he would start shooting people. I told him that I would do what Jesus told us to do in those situations and he replied by wishing me good luck! I then gave him two scenarios and asked him which sounded better. In my first example, I gave the picture of people arriving at his house with the intention of raiding it, him getting his gun and shooting at them, and then quickly

returning fire. Then I gave a second example of those same people coming to my house with the intention of raiding it, and I would quickly ask my wife to get some breakfast going, we would begin to bless the persecutors, helping them load stuff up, getting them water, and so forth. My neighbor grumbled a bit then admitted it would likely end better for me. Of course, my neighbor is not a Christian.

How about you? How would you react in such a situation?

This scenario has been played out many times by Christians of old. Will it be played out again by the Christians of today? Or will we resist?

One day, I saw a man walking his dog and noticed he had a pistol holstered on his hip. I stopped and asked him why he had the pistol. “For self-defense!” He replied. I told him that Jesus said if you live by the sword, you will die by the sword. The man agreed but didn’t seem to think it applied to him. I asked him what he thought would happen if someone approached him with the intention of robbing him and then noticed his pistol. His eyes got big, and he said, “He would shoot me!” I told him of an account in Haiti when gangs were robbing everyone they saw. An acquaintance of mine always carried a gun with him. An armed man snuck up to him and demanded that he hand over the gun. My acquaintance said he would not. He ended up being shot, and his gun was taken.

As our freedoms and livelihood are under attack in America, more and more Christians are abandoning their faith in the Creator and putting their faith in themselves and buying guns—this makes no sense to me. Have we lost faith completely? Do American Christians now think they are stronger and wiser than God? When a Christian says he will not resist and instead bless, this man is laughed to scorn, and even at times by those who consider themselves Christians! I was recently called a coward by an ordained man because I said I would not fight off an intruder. Do we no longer believe that God is almighty?

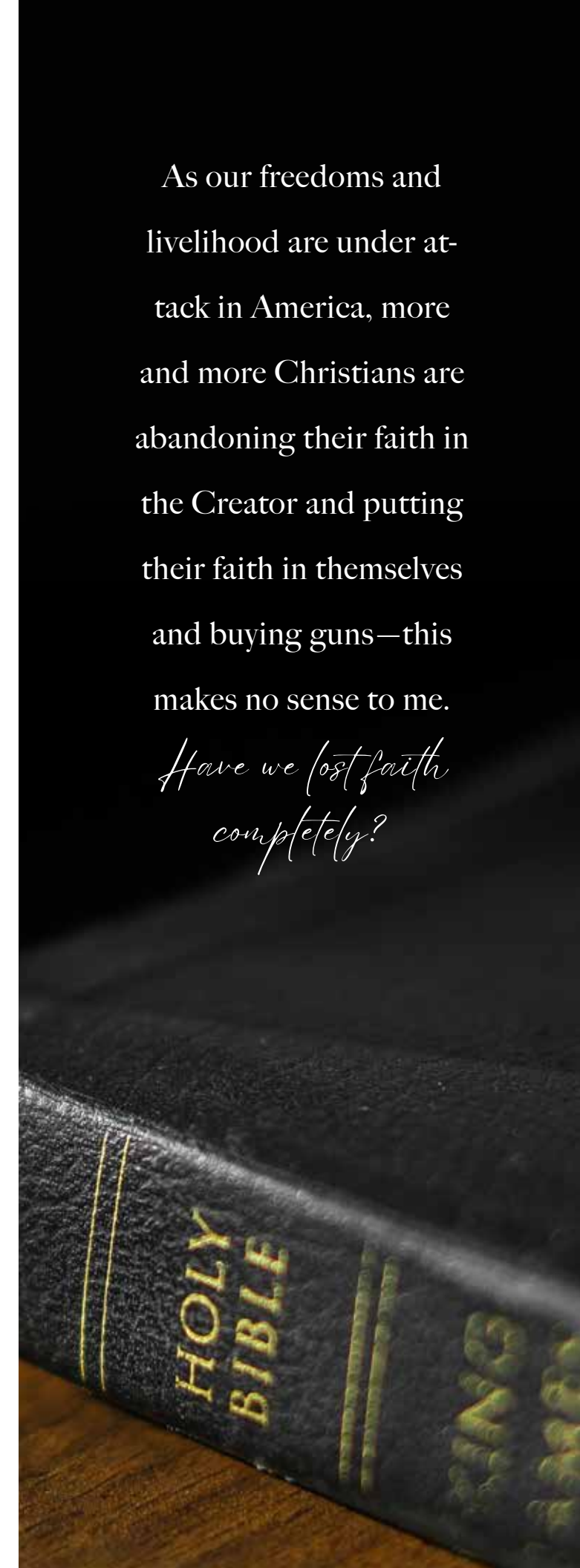
I must be frank; I see our young sisters carrying pepper spray and our young men carrying pistols. We no longer smile and take the low road, the one much less traveled. We love our lives to the point that we will not lay them down, we love our freedoms and this country to the point of bearing arms. We must wake up! We can join a program to keep us out of the war, but I’d be more worried about what will keep me out of the kingdom of God!

This world will fall, and the systems of the world will fail. There is no hope in earthly governments.

I was preaching at a seminar when I was notified that a Haitian pastor who also was going to be speaking was not going to be able to make it. He asked if I would take his sessions and told me he would send me his outlines. I agreed. The first topic was called “Hope for Haiti”. The outline listed all these practical ways of restoring Haiti to

As our freedoms and livelihood are under attack in America, more and more Christians are abandoning their faith in the Creator and putting their faith in themselves and buying guns—this makes no sense to me.

Have we lost faith completely?





an economically stable Christian country. I had to scrap the outline, and I started the session by stating “There’s no hope for Haiti”. I would like to make the same statement here about America, “There’s no hope for America”. There is only hope for the redeemed soul! There is only hope for the one that abandons this world, the things of this world, their freedoms, and “ye, their own life also” and joins the Kingdom of God!

We dare not forget that we as Christians are merely passing through, we are only strangers here and heaven is our home!

We so often get ourselves entangled with the cares of this world. We enjoy our lives here to the fullest, we love our lives, and you better believe we will resist when someone or something threatens it!

Is it pride to say we will not resist? No, it is confidence in our God! Once, I was traveling with a few missionaries when a gang emerged suddenly and overtook our vehicle. They pulled me out of the driver’s seat while demanding our guns. They didn’t believe us when we stated that we didn’t have any. They fired shots over our heads as they searched us and our vehicle. After they took anything of value, they left. The leader somehow got my phone number and called me a few weeks later. He said he knew where I lived and was coming back for more. I told him that was fine, I would be waiting for him; he could have whatever he needed. He got frustrated and asked me where I went to church, I then told him about the life-changing power of Jesus Christ. I shared with him my testimony. He got excited and demanded we meet to talk more about this Jesus.

When people see us “resist not” it is so unusual it demands

answers. When we were in Haiti, a local gang leader threatened to kill us all and burn our house to the ground if we didn’t give him a large amount of money. Since I did not fear these things but rather anticipated them, I knew God was about to work! I told him that if God allowed him to kill us all, that would be fine with us; we would not resist him. He had never run into something like that before. His whole life he had taken advantage of people by using his guns and force. Now he had met a follower of Jesus Christ who was doing the opposite. He told me to tell Jesus to come down and he would cut off his head. I cringed at the remark and warned him of the danger of a comment like that. Sadly, this man was dead within 24 hours of when we spoke. Oh, that we would wake up to the reality of God!!

During the kidnapping of the 17 missionaries several years ago, a Haitian pastor asked me why the U.S. military didn’t come and kill those wicked men and free the missionaries. If we are honest, were some of us thinking the same thing? I told the pastor that it would be a terrible ending to a great opportunity to show the power of God. I told him that I had been talking with the gang leaders and praying for them. I told him the gang leader even told me that he loved me. I shared that these evil men only need Jesus!

The pastor started to cry and gave me a big hug, then told me he would be praying for me because he would never be able to do that.

We must realize that Jesus Christ is the only difference between us and those living after the world! Jesus Christ is the only difference between us and any evil man, whether that be your sinful neighbor, the local drug dealer, or your worst enemy! How dare we put ourselves above them

because of our culture or financial standing?

“Come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord.” We as Christians are called to be a separated people. The church has always been a separate entity from the state. We do things differently and that is what separates us. The early Christians realized they could not be faithful to both God and civilized governments. So they refused to be involved with the government and its doings and paid dearly for it. They knew that they could not both love their enemies and kill them. Today our country is trying to do away with the separation between church and state. Conservative Americans want the kingdom of the world to try and live by principles of the kingdom of God. This is impossible. The country of America, as great as it may be, will never be able to live for God. It will live for itself, protect itself, and live like unregenerate men live. Will we as God’s people accept this separation?

God’s ways are bigger than our ways. God is in control. We must simply trust in Him, leaning not on our own understanding. There will be wars and rumors of wars.

We need not to defend ourselves when we have the King of kings on our side!

Let me present two accounts that highlight the difference between the two kingdom’s ways of resisting evil.

I was walking home one day on our small dirt trail when I saw a man approaching quickly. At first, I didn’t think much of him, but that changed rather quickly. I had never seen him before and the determination on his face was alarming. It all came together when I saw the pistol gripped in his right hand. A hitman was all I thought of since several people had threatened to kill me in the preceding weeks. As he approached and aimed the gun at me what

do you think when through my mind? One could assume my military training would have kicked in. In the Marines, I was trained how to disarm, take down, and kill a man in 17 seconds with only my bare hands. Did I think of that? No, not once. I won’t forget the sense of peace I had, I will assure you that I thought my life on this earth was finished, however the presence of God was overpowering! I smiled at the man and asked him if he was going to shoot me. He got frustrated, lowered the gun and quickly walked away. Oh, how I praised the Lord! I’m not sure what happened to that man, I never saw him again, however, I trust he didn’t forget that encounter quickly.

A local gang leader was terrorizing the community, he would target business owners demanding that they pay him a certain amount of money in a certain amount of time, or he would kill them. Because most of these people could not pay the large amount, they would succumb to the latter and be found dead.

One day, my time came. He told me I had two weeks to pay him \$5,000. We turned the situation over to God. After the two weeks were over, I received a call from a neighbor who told me the man was waiting outside my gate. I told the neighbor to let him wait, we were not home at the time. Unfortunately, my neighbor then called the authorities. A truckload of police charged onto the scene, and the gangster was killed! I told my family that I wished I had been home to talk to him! Now it is too late; forever in hell!

Dear friends, if we truly lay down our lives as Jesus teaches, we then will easily be able to “resist not” evil! Then this world once again can witness the power that is so much greater than the powers here on this earth, the power of the living God!



SHOULD WE *Vote?*

Gary Miller
Caldwell, Idaho

We are living in a time of moral and political upheaval. While we know God is in control, it can be discouraging. We see Congress passing laws that conflict with Biblical truth and ungodly leaders being voted into positions of power. Darkness looms, and evil is advancing! We are being told (as we were four years ago) that our vote is important and needed. The future of America, it seems, rests on who wins!

So what should followers of Jesus be doing? If you have grown up in a church fellowship that has refused political involvement, you will quickly say we should be praying. But do you ever wonder if that is all we are supposed to do? With everything that is at stake, is it different this time? Isn't there more on the line than ever before? And further, if Jesus were living in America, what would He do?

Would Jesus vote?

Jesus didn't live in a democracy, and this question isn't easy to answer. But we can glean some powerful guiding truths by observing Jesus's life. Jesus was born in a dark time. Israel was oppressed by the cruel Roman Empire, and corruption was rampant. Political shenanigans were normal, and leaders lacked personal integrity. Jesus' goal was to save, restore, bless, and bring relief to those who were oppressed. Yet, He ignored some remarkable opportunities to utilize earthly power and political influence. Why?

Let's back up and examine Jesus's purpose. What did He come to earth to do? Your immediate response might be, "Jesus came to die on the cross so that we can go to heaven when we die." There is truth in that statement, but we often forget that God's purpose is much greater than getting us to heaven. This greater purpose permeates Jesus' teachings and is woven throughout the New Testament. Jesus came to establish a rival "nation," and He called it the kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God

John the Baptist announced its arrival, Jesus repeatedly proclaimed it was here, and it was foundational in the Early Church. When we read the Sermon on the Mount, we read the blueprint, the constitution, for this rival kingdom. These are basic, daily life instructions for everyone from the shopkeeper to the land baron. Loving your enemies, sharing your wealth, faithfulness to your spouse, and caring for the poor—this is what the kingdom of Jesus Christ looks like! These are attributes of the beautiful "nation" Jesus came to set up!

There is something very unusual about this kingdom. The kingdoms of this world have always used power, force, and coercion. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he offered ownership of the existing nations if Jesus would just do things Satan's way. "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them..." was Satan's tantalizing offer.

In other words, "Why take the difficult path, Jesus? I can provide a much easier shortcut!" But Jesus didn't come to take the world using Satan's techniques. His purpose was greater than ruling over existing nations.

What did Jesus do?

When faced with the cross, Jesus admitted there were easier ways. Peter, ready to forcefully use the sword, was soundly rebuked. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Much easier; just call for angels – poof – threat eliminated!

But the kingdom of Jesus Christ doesn't force its way. The kingdom of light pulls, drawing men to it, while the kingdoms of this world push, forcing people to submit. Jesus came to attract, not attack! He wanted the beauty of His way to draw men and women to Himself. While this ability to call thousands of angels to annihilate the enemy must have been extremely tempting (a power the kingdoms of this world dream of), it would have destroyed everything Jesus came to do. May I gently suggest that the same is true today?

Fascination with force

Power has always fascinated humanity. Whoever has the biggest gun, bomb, or army, rules. This is how our world operates, and sometimes we are tempted. We see our world becoming darker, and we long for change! Abortion of innocent children, moral degradation, gender confusion, promotion of sinful lifestyles, and loss of committed relationships surround us. Darkness seems to be winning the battle, and we long for light.

But remember—we will never bring light to this world by using the tools of darkness. Force and overt power always corrupt; it is love and forgiveness that provide the attractive beauty that draws. Today, our job as kingdom Christians is not to forcefully protest the world into a particular ethical conformity. Rather, we are to attract lost humanity to the saving and peaceable beauty of Christ.

What does this look like in 2024? Can we do things Jesus' way in the middle of this highly charged political climate? Jesus didn't live under a democratically elected government, but under a harsh, tyrannical Roman regime that had brutally suppressed the Jewish people for decades. Further, many Jews were actively looking for rebellion. They wanted a strong Jewish leader capable of overthrowing the Romans and kicking them out of Palestine. Jesus had power and the hearts of the common people, and could easily have started a revolution. What an opportunity!

What didn't Jesus do?

Many times we ask the question, "What would Jesus do?" But we should ask another question: "What didn't Jesus do?" After all, He was facing even stronger cultural and

political pressure than we are. Let's look at four things Jesus refused to do:

1. Jesus refused to utilize political power or use force.

He calmly told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." Amazing! Did Jesus just miss a huge opportunity? No, He was simply seeing something we often miss. We are constantly being told that the way to transform society is to vote the right people into power and that the solution to reform is in Washington, DC. But when we succumb to the belief that transformation will come through ballots, bullets, or bombs, we have forgotten the way of Jesus. When we choose to enter the voting booth and get involved in the political process, we are telling a lost world that force and power are the way to bring change. We are demonstrating the belief that Jesus' way of peace and love isn't sufficient.

2. Jesus didn't succumb to anxious concern.

Jesus lived in full confidence that His Father was in control. He knew that the rulers of the Jews wanted to kill Him, and the Romans would be glad to silence Him as well. Yet He didn't let this fear overwhelm Him. Today, I am concerned that many Anabaptists are succumbing to paranoia and fear. Ironically, when I travel to persecuted countries, believers there seem less fearful than Christians here in America. We fearfully subscribe to conspiracy theories, pass on unverified gossip, and align ourselves with political talk show hosts. Rumors fly, and in the process, our mission is forgotten. It is a time for concern and to be praying for guidance. But we are not to live in terror or fear that the powers of darkness are stronger than our Heavenly Father. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear," the Apostle Paul told Timothy, and it is still true today. Jesus didn't succumb to paranoia, and neither should we.

3. Jesus didn't complain or criticize the government.

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's," was Jesus' response to His disciples when asked about paying taxes. This was a legitimate question. Both Jewish and Roman powers actively opposed Jesus and later His church. But Jesus and the Apostles were clear. Even when facing potential persecution, we are to comply with earthly governments as long as they do not force us to disobey God.

Frankly, living in America has spoiled us. Just let the government ask us to comply with some regulation which even slightly inconveniences us, and instantly we are up in arms. Our complaining and resistance to small governmental requests do not provide an attractive, compelling picture to American seekers. As much as possible, we should be known for paying our taxes, complying with regulations, and being upstanding residents in our communities.

4. Jesus refused to let earthly politics distract Him.

In spite of the highly charged political climate, Jesus never

took His focus off His ultimate mission. His goal, and the focus of His followers after His death, was building another kingdom—a kingdom unbound by geographical lines. It is a kingdom that is just as concerned about refugees from other countries, as those who live in America. It is also a kingdom that will survive and thrive, regardless of who is elected in the next election. Today we have a tendency to get caught up in the political clamor and shift our focus from the kingdom of God to the kingdoms of this world. But Jesus refused to do this. He wasn't interested in promoting Jewish or Roman superiority, and we shouldn't get caught up in promoting the country we happen to reside in.

The major concern

My primary concern today is not the government becoming socialistic or the fact that laws are being generated that condone sin. Neither is it who wins the coming election or the future of America. Democracy is not necessary for Christianity to flourish. Ungodly legislation will exist until the Lord comes again. No, the major catastrophe is much deeper. It is when people who proclaim to be following Jesus leave His methods and try to bring change through earthly power and force.

Unfortunately, the American evangelical church as a whole is no longer famous for transforming hearts, lives, and communities. Rather, it is known as a powerful political movement, a force to be reckoned with at the ballot box. But when the church links arms with the world, it always loses its power, its compelling beauty, and its ability to transform.

Give us Mohammed?

The Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul, Turkey, has many historic and unique treasures on display. One of these is Mohammed's sword. Each year, around three million visitors file past a well-lit glass case to get a glimpse of Mohammed's weapon. Viewers marvel at its curved handle and jeweled scabbard which glisten in the special lighting. The sword represents how Mohammed (and almost every other world leader), ruled and reigned. It is the world's way. Unlike Mohammed, Jesus was willing to be killed rather than take life. He refused to utilize force or earthly governments, and you will not find His sword in a museum. And yet I wonder. Does the fact that politics and voting tempt us demonstrate dissatisfaction with the way of Jesus? Is it possible we actually prefer the way of Mohammed over Jesus?

We long to see change, and when we don't see God working as we would like, it is tempting to protest certain laws, apply pressure on government officials, or even vote for an earthly leader who promises to bring transformation. But relying on earthly power and force, as Mohammed did, is something Jesus refused to do. We should as well! Our task is not to vote the right people into power or to use political means to bring about change. Neither is it our job to

protest or force unbelievers to follow Jesus and transform America into a "Christian nation." Rather, we are called to attract an unbelieving world to the beauty of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The Jesus Way

The Jesus Way brings change as individual hearts surrender to His Lordship. Like the seemingly insignificant mustard seed, his love grows and spreads through local church communities. It empowers us to love each other sacrificially, care for the weak and downtrodden, and love our unbelieving neighbors. The Jesus Way causes us to love our enemies, give anonymously to those who lack, and fast and pray for earthly governments. When this occurs, it provides an attractive, compelling, beautiful sight. We won't see the full completion of this kingdom until Jesus returns. But we

are seeing the first fruits even now as His love and power are being demonstrated in church communities all around the globe. And it is beautiful to observe!

¹ *Matthew 3:2*

² *Mark 1:15*

³ *Acts 8:12, 19:8, 20:25*

⁴ *Matthew 26:53*

⁵ *John 18:36*

⁶ *2 Timothy 1:7*

⁷ *Mark 12:17*

⁸ *Romans 13:1-7*

⁹ *Acts 5:29*

Christians Vote?

—Darren Brubaker

As we near the next election, "Christians, vote!" is oft the plea. "Elect yourselves a godly leader if you want your liberty."

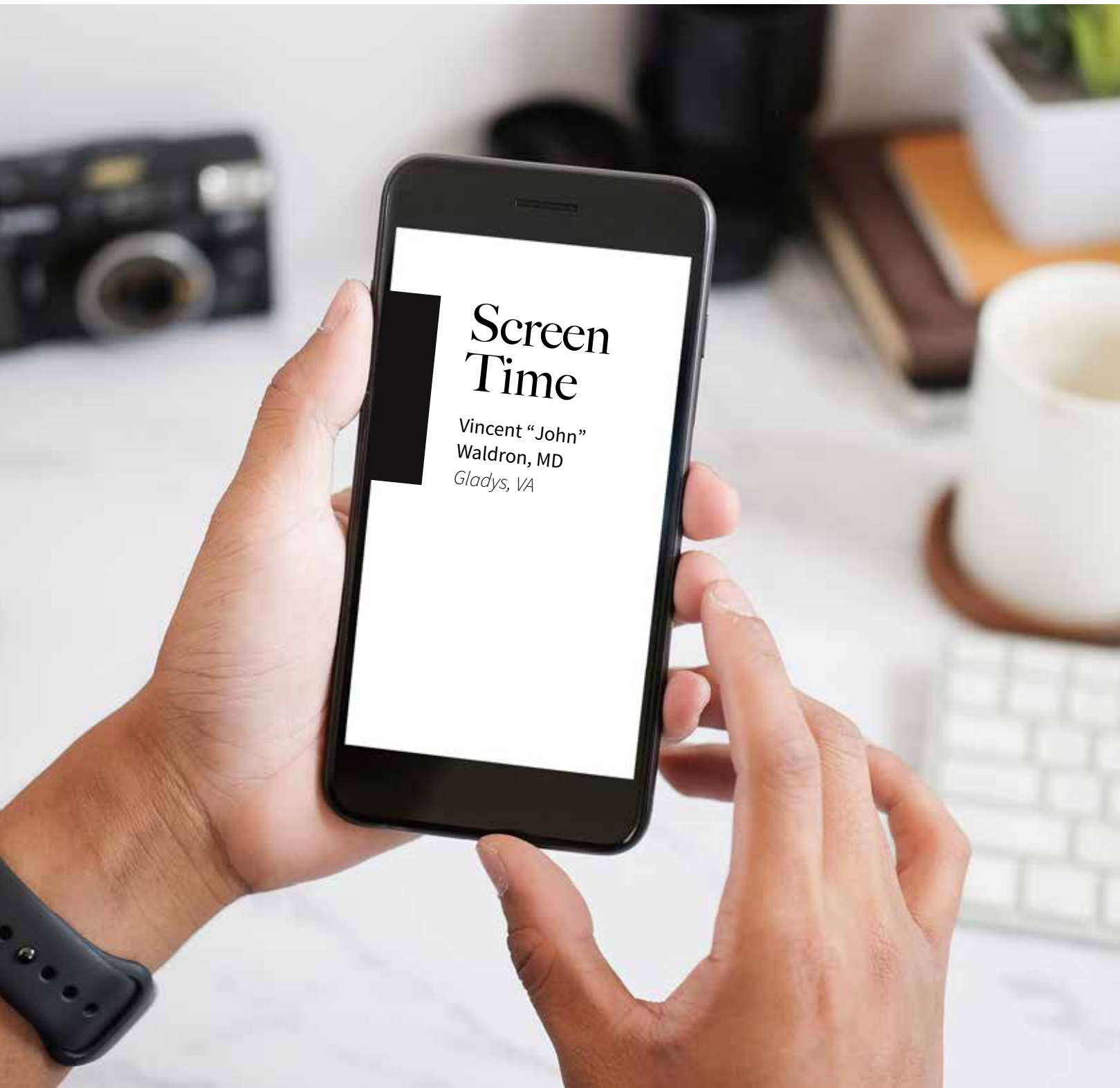
Is it true, O fellow pilgrims, has Christ promised freedom here? "On earth you will be persecuted." Didn't Jesus make it clear?

We pass through but for a moment and our homeland is above. Have we not elected Jesus for that country that we love?

Should we really choose a leader who would call our men to war? Should we rather follow Jesus Who commands to kill no more?

If we truly trust our Father, why elect a mortal man? God is King o'er all the nations ever since the world began.

If our focus is on heaven and our hearts are over there, Let us drop earth's politics and serve this nation with our prayers.



“I want your phone!” The little girl said firmly to her mother.

“Not now, Josie,” her mother said. “We’re at the doctor’s office.”

“I NEED your phone!” The three-year-old girl demanded. I wasn’t sure what Josie needed with the phone. Since she was only three, it was unlikely that one of the European heads of state would be trying to contact her, and I doubted that she had many business connections who were likely to be urgently trying to text her.

Josie continued to demand the phone until her mother, tired out by her daughter’s insistence, handed the device over to the girl. Expertly, Josie opened the phone, typed in the password, and began to browse the internet, looking for videos that fit her mood at that given moment.

Unfortunately, I was anything but shocked. Most parents use devices to keep their children quiet during office visits, and it is not unusual for young children to have their own tablet to play games or do whatever they please.

Ephesians 6:4 says, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” I wonder what the Apostle Paul would have had to say about using screens to keep children quiet. My guess is that he would have been negative on the subject.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (not the most conservative organization in the world) has written a statement saying that children under the age of two should have no or very limited exposure to screens (including both TV and mobile devices). Even with older children, they recommend that the amount of time they spend on devices be limited. They mention in their statement that too much screen time can lead to weight problems (due to lack of exercise), body image issues, mood issues, and problems from exposure to violent and sexual content. Of course, all of this is present not just in movies, but also on the internet as a whole.

Undoubtedly, digital spaces are more dangerous than the real world for children. It is far more likely that they will encounter a predator online than in other parts of their life. I think most of us do well with limiting screen time in our younger children’s lives. And yet, I wonder if we do it in our own lives as well? Do we realize the power of the computer in our hands and the danger that it brings with it?

The Internet

There was no specific inventor of the internet, nor an official date that we can say when it began. Instead, it came about slowly as various private and public networks on college campuses and other locations began to tie together to allow for the better sharing of information and communication.

In the beginning, the internet was mostly text, and it ran very slowly. Dial-up modems could download information at a snail’s pace, and the idea of sharing large images, much

less video, was a crazy thought for most people. They were just happy if they could get their emails downloaded in fifteen or twenty minutes.

Over time, it sped up, and the volume of information sharing exploded. Old, out-of-copyright books were digitized and made available for free. News sites opened to share up-to-the-minute reports from around the world, and people were now able to make video calls anywhere in the world. At present, the internet is accessed by over 4 billion people and the amount of data that is moved by them is estimated to be about 717 terabytes per second. Christians are using the internet too, and many are unaware of how this use affects them.

Pornography

Sexual content is a problem. On their website, Covenant Eyes states that 68 percent of Christian men view pornography on a regular basis. The numbers for women are only half that, but clearly, it is still a problem.

Matthew 5:28 says, “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” The internet is a dangerous place to attempt to maintain a pure mind and heart. Jesus understood that purity was not just about action—it was about heart and mind. Satan understands the same thing, and he works hard to make temptation as easily available as possible.

Later on, Jesus told His listeners that it was better to cut off your hand or gouge out your eye. It is better to lose one of your members than to be cast into hell. The point is clear. Moral purity is extremely important. Nothing is too extreme to do in order to gain victory in this area. I would argue that for some people, casting their smartphones far from them would avail significantly more than cutting off their hands. For, if thy smartphone cause thee to sin, it were better to toss it into the nearest garbage can than to carry that phone to the depths of hell.

Time Wastage

I was out the other day and saw a group of four young people seated at a table. Oddly, none of them was conversing or making eye contact with each other. Instead, they were all bent over their smartphones. It is hard for adults to criticize young people because the adults have the same issues. A recent study showed that the average American spends 7 hours a day looking at screens.¹ They spend over three and a half hours on their phone.

Even if we are not looking at anything immoral or sinful, this simply is not the best use of our time. Ephesians 5:16 says, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” We buy various things with our time. Good things could include things like reading a book, spending time in prayer, or reaching out to people who need encouragement. While we have our internet browser open, we are doing none of

these things but are simply passing (or wasting) time.

Each day has only 24 hours in it. Our focus must be on using these seconds and minutes for things that have real value, not activities that simply allow us to float along with as little contact with the people around us as possible.

News

I am surprised by how many people are proud of the fact that they use the internet to keep up with the day's current events. A couple hundred years ago it could have taken weeks for events happening in out-of-the-way corners of the globe to reach the headlines of newspapers. Now, it is unusual if breaking news doesn't hit news websites within minutes.

People can now follow political campaigns with high precision and listen to every tiny gaff of their favorite politician's opponent. More than that, they can post videos of such things to social media with the click of a button. Of course, there are dangers with this sort of focus on news. For one thing, most of the news we get has some kind of bias. We are good at picking up bias that disagrees with our own preconceptions, but news stories that agree with our chosen perspective are simply added to reinforce our ideas.

People talk about the internet as an "echo chamber" that simply repeats back at us the sorts of things we want to read about. Search engines and social media platforms know us better than we know ourselves and deliver up steaming morsels of news that precisely fit our appetite and keep us from expanding our world view.

It is said that news organizations operate under the mantra, "If it bleeds, it leads." That is, the more violent and terrible the story, the more attention it will draw to a website. It is no wonder that many who read a lot of news tend to have a bleak view of the world around them.

I had a patient who struggled to fall asleep at night and admitted to me that she spent time right before getting into bed reading news articles.

"I just have so much anxiety and anger after reading these stories," she told me.

Before prescribing any medication, I asked her to stop reading any news in the evening hours. Amazingly, without any pills, her sleep patterns improved.

From a Christian standpoint, there is a lot of danger to consider. These sites are all trying to whip up support for one side or another. Every election is THE election on which the hope of Christians depends. Whether it is George W. Bush versus John Kerry or more recent elections, pundits have a way of making Christians believe their freedom depends on the right candidate making it into the White House.

This saddens me. The reality is not only that Jesus is not a Republican or Democrat—He isn't even an American. He told Pilate just before the crucifixion that "My kingdom is

not of this world." God wants to see Christians love their fellowmen regardless of what country they were born in or where they live now.

More than that, reading the news overly much has a tendency to get us to overestimate Satan's power. I am amazed at how many Christians struggle with depression and anger, believing that Satan is winning. Of course, he is powerful. He is the prince of the power of the air, one of the greatest beings that God created.

There is no reason for fear. We serve a mighty God, and He will triumph despite all of Satan's efforts.



Health Risks of Internet Usage

As time passes, researchers discover the harmful effects of spending too much time online. There is even something known as Internet addiction, where people exhibit the same need to be online as people experience who are addicted to drugs. While they may not physically go through withdrawal when they spend too little time online, they still think about it all of the time and experience negative emotions when they try to step away from it.² Even for people who don't have an actual internet addiction, time on the internet has a lot of negative repercussions.

For one thing, the more time that people spend online, the higher the rates of depression and loneliness. The issue seems to be that people are replacing face-to-face relationships and time together with digital replicas, and while they may seem to fill the same space, the digital replicas are not the same.

God made us to need Him, but He also made us in such a way that we need human contact too. Even the most introverted person has a need to spend time with other humans, make eye contact, and feel heard and understood. Having a post liked on social media is a poor substitute.³

One of the things that is made clear by the studies is that younger people—particularly those in their teen years or younger are more likely to struggle with limiting their internet time and are also more likely to experience mental health issues related to their internet usage. There is no doubt that the number of young people diagnosed with mental health disorders is climbing very high. I am sure there are many reasons, but spending too much time in digital spaces contributes to it.

Beyond this, there are physical issues related to spending too much time online. Quite simply, our bodies are not made to sit for an hour or two on end. People who spend hours in front of screens are more prone to backache, neckaches, headaches, and eye strain.

A small study looked at Russian adolescents and found that heavy internet usage was associated with increased blood pressure levels.⁴ These blood pressures seemed to return to normal when the youths exercised, so no permanent damage was done.

Perhaps one last thing to mention is sleep issues. A study that looked at internet users in Bangladesh during COVID-19 found that over 40 percent of those who reported heavy internet usage experienced difficulty sleeping.⁵ There certainly was a lot of negative news and fear going on at that point, so that might be all that was going on there, but there is also an effect from exposure to "blue light" that we have seen.

Screens emit blue light. The problem is that this light gives a message to our brains that it is time to wake up and decrease the level of melatonin that is made. Using

a smartphone or screen right before bedtime could negatively impact your sleep simply because the hormones that tell your brain that it is time to rest are at much lower levels than they should be.⁶

Conclusion

Although the New Testament was written long before the advent of the internet age, we can still find various principles that should direct our actions. Galatians 5:22, 23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Most of these qualities are absent from dialogs found on social media. More than that, the last fruit mentioned, temperance (self-control) is extremely important in this context.

The question really is if we are in control of our internet browsing or if it controls us. We need to answer this question honestly. The Rich Young Ruler would never have said that his riches controlled his life, and yet when Jesus asked him to give them away and follow him, he went sorrowfully away, unable to truly follow the Master.

In the same way, many people believe that they are in control of their internet use. They point to the good things, the news they read, the ways in which they stay in contact with people who are far away, and the recipes they can easily access with the touch of a button. Their work and business require the use of computers and the internet.

All the while, they are not in control. In idle moments during the day, they pull out their phones and start scrolling. They look at things they shouldn't and do not realize how the culture and views of the world around them are shifting their vision from kingdom-centered to one focused on much more transient things.

We need to protect our children from these risks, but we need to protect ourselves as well. It would be better to eliminate our technology and live a life fully dedicated to following Christ than to follow the current events of this world and in the end lose our eternal life.

¹ 18 Average Screen Time Statistics [2023]: How Much Screen Time Is Too Much? - Zippia

² Internet Addiction: A Brief Summary of Research and Practice - PMC (nih.gov)

³ Associations Between Problematic Internet Use and Mental Health Outcomes of Students: A Meta-analytic Review - PMC (nih.gov)

⁴ Cardiovascular response to physical exercise and the risk of Internet addiction in 15-16-year-old adolescents - PMC (nih.gov)

⁵ Internet Use Impact on Physical Health during COVID-19 Lockdown in Bangladesh: A Web-Based Cross-Sectional Study - PMC (nih.gov)

⁶ Analysis of circadian properties and healthy levels of blue light from smartphones at night | Scientific Reports (nature.com)

In Defense of Conscience

Rick Hess
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What is this thing called Conscience? We find it already working in Adam and Eve after they ate of the forbidden fruit. It was no doubt what revealed their nakedness and caused them to hide from God. The Bible reveals it to be a created part of all human beings, who have been made in the image of God himself. We, like God, are three-part beings: Body, Soul & Spirit and each of these has three parts.

So, where does this thing called conscience dwell?

Our body also has three parts: our flesh, our senses, and our appetites. The conscience needs to touch them, but it doesn't dwell there. Our soul has three parts as well: our mind, will, and emotions. A well-ordered life will have these three areas ruled by the conscience, but it doesn't dwell there. Our spirit, originating with God Himself, is the place of our connection and worship with our Creator. It is the still small voice that hears from the Holy Spirit and guides us into obedience, honor for God, and the truth.

Through the new birth, the conscience is purged from dead works, and previous defilement, which made it not operate very effectively. It is made alive, tender, and responsive to its new Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ¹.

Since the beginning of the church, the consciences of believers have been challenged and tried by the enemies of our souls. To maintain a pure conscience is critically important, yet many earthly leaders have failed to see the great importance of it. Nor have they recognized the priority of this God-renewed conscience versus their own will, whims, and commands. So, when Peter said to the High Priest, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye", it was not insubordination that was leading him, but the Holy Spirit.

One of these critical areas of conscience that has repeatedly been challenged is that of obeying the commands of Christ concerning how we treat our enemies, those who persecute us and spitefully use us. Christ's teaching of turning the other cheek, going the extra mile and not

resisting evil have been tested in the lives of Christians. Because we believe that every soul has been made in the image of God and their life is precious to Him, we think it is better to die than to kill.

From the first through third centuries, pagan Rome persecuted believers, mainly for not worshipping the Emperor, whom they believed represented the Roman Empire. Occasionally they tried to exercise their authority to have men serve the nation as soldiers or in politics. The early Christians, for the most part, stood strong, declaring that they would be of more value to the empire on their knees than bearing the sword. There were some who suffered and a few notable cases of martyrdom for this cause. There was a clear distinction between the two kingdoms. Because the church fulfilled her calling, secular history notes this era as the 200-year golden age of peace in the Roman Empire (Pax Romanus). During the third century, several waves of severe persecution attempted to annihilate the church, which by this time had grown quite large, and in some cases, had grown weary in well-doing.

In the fourth Century, the unthinkable happened. Emperor Constantine proposed a marriage of the church of Jesus Christ and the pagan Roman Empire. He then placed himself at the head of its hierarchy. Through this adulterous marriage of church and state, a hybrid harlot was conceived and born. This new organization tried hard to resemble the true church of Jesus Christ. Several decades later, just before the Roman Empire collapsed, several very capable men like Augustine and Jerome took it upon themselves to rewrite the last will and testament of the Lord Jesus to fit their own new Roman empire. They called this blend "holy". One of the doctrines that were totally turned about was the use of the sword and political power, in what they presented as the "Just War Theory". Along with that came mandatory infant baptism, mandatory church membership for all in a particular locale, justified torture, sacerdotalism (salvation through this organization

and its sacraments), and state-paid church leadership positions. These were some of the components that helped plummet the Western world into the Dark Ages as the Roman Empire finally collapsed.

Ironically, when the "church" made peace with war, there haven't been many decades in the last 1700 years that have not seen cruel, bloody wars, often fought between groups professing Christians that claim to serve the Prince of Peace. The idea that every "heretic", Jew and (eventually) Muslim, must either convert or die was the natural fruit of this kind of carnal organization.

That is the backdrop to the tumultuous 1500s in Europe. By this time, power, prosperity, superstitions, and the traditions of 900 years had so corrupted the ancient harlot "church" that many people could no longer just go along with her anymore. This was the beginning of the Reformation period. There were many small movements all over Europe and elsewhere that arose. Some were good and valid attempts to bring positive changes. Some were unspeakably gross and cultish groups that ended up being as bad or worse than the state church they were fleeing from. The main directional differences fell into three main camps: Traditional - i.e, Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestant Reformation Churches - Lutheran, Reformed, and Anabaptists i.e. the Swiss Brethren, Mennonite, Hutterites, Amish, and other similar groups.

The Catholic's goal was the same as it had been for over 900 years: maintain authority and control of the ignorant masses and squash all rivals with fear of torture and the sword.

The Reformers saw the error in that path and wanted to point men to faith in Jesus Christ, refocus on the Bible, and return to the way it was in Augustine and Jerome's days. They sort of said the old building is not all bad, it just needs to be remodeled.

The Anabaptists agreed with the Reformers on many points, but instead of going back to Augustine and Jerome's days as the Reformers did, they wanted to rediscover primitive apostolic Christianity of the first centuries. They didn't believe the building was on the foundation at all anymore. The foundation needed to be rediscovered, the rubble cleared away, and the building rebuilt according to the original pattern! As Jude says "Earnestly contend for the Faith that was once delivered to the Saints."

During the Reformation era, most of the land was owned by several regional princes who were a part of the Catholic church system. A few ventured to become Protestant, but it was very rare to find any that were sympathetic to the Anabaptists. These princes, in their stately castles, derived their wealth and power by cooperating with the state churches to control the peasants who provided labor on their farms. Many also had armies consisting of young men who were under their control. This served to protect their own investments from attacks from other princes or the ever-present threats of the Muslim Turks. Some also made considerable income by leasing their young men out





as mercenary soldiers to fight some other princes' battles. Needless to say, they didn't want to hear their men telling them "We have come to make the Lord Jesus Christ our King, and we aren't willing to go against our conscience to bear the sword for you anymore".

This new Anabaptist doctrine was fiercely contested in Switzerland. Separation of church and state, non-resistance believers' baptism, and salvation through Jesus were on trial. Threats, fines, arrests, horrible tortures, and enslavement couldn't stop the movement as new converts arose to fill the gaps of the ones slaughtered or sent away.

In the late 1600s, an English Quaker, named William Penn heard of the plight of the exiled Swiss Brethren. He traveled to Germany and France and invited them to settle in Pennsylvania. There was little for our forefathers to lose, so several went to investigate. They returned with good news, and then others followed by the thousands. Under the Quakers in Pennsylvania, they could own land, work for their own benefit, and practice their religion freely without persecution. They could follow their conscience not having to bear arms. The potential for becoming wealthy in this new world was huge, especially for the second and third generations, who knew nothing of the sorrows and sufferings of Europe. Would these people who had prospered spiritually under persecution perish under financial prosperity?

Several concerned Anabaptist leaders had the Dutch Martyrs Mirror translated into German and printed by Peter Miller at the Ephrata Cloister in Lancaster County, PA. The goal was to teach future generations about the high price paid for liberty of conscience and the need for a clear separation of the two kingdoms.

By the 1770s, a rebellion was brewing among the English Americans. It finally erupted into a full-blown revolution. The Anabaptists were again caught in the middle. As those who had immigrated from Germany, they had promised to serve the King of England and to be faithful to him. But they were now being pressured and persecuted for not helping the American rebellion. Some were publicly humiliated for not mustering to the militia drills. Many had their flintlock hunting rifles confiscated. Some Swiss Mennonite gunsmiths, famous for their precision workmanship, were forced out of business for refusing to produce guns for the war. Others were imprisoned or even tried for treason. When the war finally ended, a migration of about 2,000 Anabaptists left Pennsylvania for Ontario. Meanwhile, another migration of Anabaptists headed west and south into the Shenandoah Valley.

Not many years later, the country was again in turmoil over a number of issues, including slavery. In the 1680s, some Quakers and Mennonites made a joint appeal to stop the slave trade. Pennsylvania abolished slavery, in 1780,

with a 40-year phase-out plan. Unfortunately, the rest of the United States did not follow Pennsylvania's example. This could have spared our nation from shedding American blood, more than the Revolution, Spanish American, WWI, WWII, and the Korean conflict all put together. Both sides of this conflict, affected by their Catholic or Protestant beliefs, were absolutely sure that God was on their side. The Anabaptists in the north could pay a fine that was the equivalent of a year's wages to send someone else to war in their stead if they were drafted. They were only supposed to be fined once, but some were fined as much as three times, being forced to auction off their farms to maintain their clear consciences. How much is your clear conscience before God worth to you?

In the south, the Anabaptist people fared far worse. Men were taken by force to serve in the military. Some escaped, like fugitives, to West Virginia, leaving their families behind. When the Southern army came through, they took what they could to feed their troops and horses. But when the Northern army came through the Shenandoah Valley, they made a swath 25 miles wide and 50 miles long, where they stole or killed all the livestock, took all the grain, burned down the grain mills and the barns, and blew up railroads and bridges. They meant to leave the Southern army destitute of a source of supplies. This also left many Anabaptist families destitute of food and supplies and even a way of earning a living for several years. During the Civil War, the conscientious objectors' status didn't exist yet with the federal government.

Finally, peace was again restored and the American people were occupied with rebuilding the land that was devastated by their own hands.

1914 marked the beginning of what the world called the "War to end all Wars". Many people were needed to fight this war. Conscientious objectors suffered during this war. Some suffered threatenings, public humiliation, and imprisonment, and several died at the hands of the military. Conscientious objectors paid the price of a good conscience. At the beginning of WWII, the US government decided that this should not happen again. Something needed to be established for conscientious objectors in our land.

From World War II up until the Vietnam War, The US Selective Services System has created several programs to try to accommodate conscientious objectors, giving an opportunity to serve in some way rather than bear arms and take human lives against their conscience. These various programs had differing levels of success. Many who served in the 1W Service program are grateful to our nation as the government tried to understand and work with them. Nevertheless, many Anabaptist churches were unprepared to deal with spiritual casualties from low moral surroundings, lack of accountability, and lack of maturity of our own

young men who served. Some of these men failed and lost their way, never returning to their churches.

After the end of the Vietnam War (1955-1975), the draft was eliminated. However, the uncertainty of a volunteer armed force sufficient to meet all threats loomed over the nation. Since then, the Selective Service System (SSS) has been re-engaged and ready when needed.

Conservative Anabaptist Service Programs

In 2005, several concerned Anabaptist leaders met to decide what to do in the event of another draft. How could they make the 1W experience not only less of a threat to our young people's spiritual condition but actually make it a beneficial time in their lives and spiritual growth? The SSS was willing to discuss this if the Anabaptist leaders developed a program before a draft was enacted. If they waited until there was a draft, it would be too late. After many meetings with the leaders of Anabaptist churches, Christian Aid Ministries, and the SSS, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with the SSS. Christian Aid Ministries was designated a potential employer of conscientious objectors in the event of a military draft. That all sounds good on paper, but how does it work in the event of a draft?

The Conservation Anabaptist Service Program (CASP) is a draft preparation service program of Christian Aid Ministries. Short-term pilot projects provide a Christian boot camp experience and have been the answer both to our churches gaining the experience in the event of a draft and for the SSS, who has access to our training records. Between 2005 and 2024, about 20 conservative Anabaptist churches joined hands together to work for the good of our young people and their consciences in the event of another wartime draft.

Goals of CASP:

- Be a liaison between church constituencies and the SSS, and give leadership in assuring compliance to SSS standards.
- Provide employment that will enhance the convictions of conscientious objectors from participating churches.
- Provide a work environment with ethical and moral values that will benefit the conscientious objector.
- Provide employment in both national and international settings.
- Develop and approve church constituency networks for employment projects.

May we all take a part in serving the Great King of kings. May we all encourage each other in the ways of our Lord, helping each other maintain a conscience void of offense before God and men!

¹ Hebrews 9:14, Titus 1:15, 1 Timothy 1:2.

A Christ-Centered Courtship

Satan's Snares for Male and Female

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We discussed God's Plan for Male and Female in the last issue. Today's topic, Satan's Snares for Male and Female, is not as enjoyable. And yet, to complete this series, "A Christ-centered Courtship," we need to deal with both because they're realities of life.

There are five goals for this series:

Goal #1. To turn the hearts of the fathers to their children.

Goal #2. To turn the hearts of the children to their fathers.

Goal #3. As parents, we would get a burden to lead each one of our children into the perfect will of God for their lives.

Goal #4. That each one of you young people would get a burden to seek after God, to find fulfillment and purpose in walking with God, and that you would seek maturity in your manners and in your character.

Goal #5. That young men and young women would rise up to be godly fathers and godly mothers with a vision to raise up another godly generation.

Satan's snare for male and female.

God has a beautiful plan for male and female, and His plan brings blessings. But Satan's plan is to destroy God's plan. Fallen man has to deal with the carnal nature of the flesh. Satan would like to use the things of this world to destroy God's plan for each one of us.

A snare is a cable or a wire that has a little sliding loop on its end. The little loop has a lock that will slide only one way. When it flips, it locks into place. A snare will pull tighter on its own when pressure is applied. A snare must be concealed to be effective. If we see the snares our adversary sets for us, we're going to avoid them. It is designed to kill. Our adversary, the devil, intends to destroy and kill. He wants to ruin God's plan.

God has a holy plan for you, but Satan wants to defile your moral purity emotionally and physically before

marriage. After marriage, he tries to destroy the marriage relationship. Satan's plan is to destroy God's plan, but greater is He that is in us.

We want to look at five points out of 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8).

A life of sanctification and honor

Possessing our vessels in sanctification and honor is our protection from the snares the devil lays for us. We will overcome him if we learn to possess our vessels in sanctification and honor. "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet. . ." Romans 16:20. It can happen over and over in our lives. We will be blessed if we follow God's plan.

Living in sanctification and honor means walking in a way that will please God. The longer we walk this way, the more sanctified, holy, and separated unto God we will be. Young people, if you possess your vessel in sanctification and honor, you will walk in the fear of God. You will be concerned about the things God sees in your life. You will learn how to possess your vessel in a way that honors God in every way possible. Sanctification and honor are important when you start or are in a courtship.

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In 1 Timothy 5:2, Paul writes that Timothy should treat "the elder women as mothers and the younger as sisters, with all purity." Learning to walk in sanctification and honor will keep us from falling into the devil's snares. You need someone to give you direction, and you need the Spirit of God to help you. If the day comes to get married, you will need to know how to walk with God. Mom and Dad won't be there to guide you. Mom and Dad need satisfaction in knowing the Spirit of God is leading you.

How should single men and women relate to each other? Should young you avoid talking to each other whatsoever? The answer is no. Do married men and women avoid talking to each other whatsoever? Obviously, no. Young men and women should treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ the same way that married people do. We should all, married and unmarried, live our lives in sanctification and honor.

How much should a married brother talk with a sister other than his wife? How much would be considered ok? How would we feel if a married sister would talk with the same brother, other than her husband, every week at church services? Would we be ok with that? No, we wouldn't be ok with that. The same principle applies to single brothers and sisters. Walk in sanctification and honor in the way that we can be respectful to each other.

In the last issue, we talked about the innocence of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve had never seen another man or another woman. They were completely innocent and free, having never given their emotions to another. They were for each other! He was a one-woman man, and she was a one-man woman. You can have that, but you will need to guard your emotions. Learn how to possess your vessel in sanctification and honor in this area. Don't play with your emotions if you want to be like Adam and Eve.

How do I know if someone is playing with my emotions? Here are a few warnings:

- Beware if someone gives you frequent attention. Don't let yourself be drawn in.
- Watch for that light in the eyes. Someone trying to catch your eye, then just giving you that little smile. He or she is trying to draw your emotions.
- Perhaps you realize you are being watched. When you look up, Mr. or Miss So-and-so is looking at you. You can't say, "Please look the other way." But you can talk to Dad about it, and Dad can go talk to his or her parents.

Abstain from fornication

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

Fornication means "harlotry, adultery, and incest; moral impurity." Why do we even have to discuss this? These things have happened in the midst of God's people, so we

want to sound the warning: “Abstain from fornication!” If you think you are above the possibility of it happening to you, perhaps you may get too bold and go places you shouldn’t. You may do things you should flee from.

“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body” (1 Corinthians 6: 12-13). Your body is for the Lord, and you need to walk in sanctification and honor. You must allow your authorities to guide you. Allow the Spirit of God to guide you. Your “body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” It is not for fornication.

“Flee fornication” means to run from anything that is not sanctification and honor. Don’t stand and try to face it. God says, “flee” for a reason. If you guard your emotions, you will be able to discern those snares from Satan. He wants to scar and destroy your life.

The lust of concupiscence

Another snare of Satan is the lust of concupiscence. “Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God” (1 Thessalonians 4:5). The word lust here simply means “a passion.” The word concupiscence is “a longing for what is forbidden.” A passionate longing for what is forbidden. Many people in the world are ruled by their passionate longings, but God wants us to keep our emotions.

Young people, you are maturing into young men and women. Something is beginning to wake up inside of you that attracts you to the opposite gender. God created that attraction with a specific purpose in mind. God didn’t create that attraction to freely indulge in, but this is what the devil would like us to do. If you allow Satan, he will destroy you. As you mature, it’s important to learn to control your body, that is, developing into a young man or a young lady. Don’t let your passions and longings go in lust of concupiscence. If you follow your passions, it will take you straight to the snares of the devil. Feelings start awakening in your body that you’re not accustomed to. Talk to Mom and Dad about it. They want you to get through this time of change with purity, sanctification, and honor. Young people, you won’t be able to handle these changes unless you’re in love with Jesus, love your Bible, love to pray, and your heart is passionate about God. It is possible to overcome those passions!

Another aspect of the lust of concupiscence is flirting. Flirting means “to express emotions of love without serious intent; to play with love; to toy with love.” You may not think you are flirting, but what is happening in your mind? The way you think affects you. Are you giving little looks that communicate? Maybe it’s just a little look across the room

that catches the eye. Both of you smile and look the other way. Nobody else saw it. That’s letting the emotions go. Be careful! It’s the beginning of the lust of concupiscence.

I was filling up at the gas station when I noticed this lady. She was outside on her break, talking with a young man beside her. That young man didn’t quit smiling at her from the time I arrived till I left. I don’t wonder what was going on in his heart.

Mom and Dad, we know our children. Let’s be honest and real with them. If there’s too much boy-girl talk in the house, we need to talk about it. It’s time for this to shut down. And yes, there is excitement, for example, when courtship is announced. Let’s be careful where the boy-girl conversation goes.

Let’s talk about dating. Specifically, dating without the approval from your authorities. I’m not referring to using the term dating in a godly way that has parental blessings on it. I’m referring to a temporary romantic relationship between two persons of the opposite gender. Trying different partners in search of one you like. Letting your emotions go here, then letting them go there. You’re just shopping around. How can a person expect to have a solid, committed marriage with that kind of an on/off relationship?

When a young couple starts courting, their relationship builds as they get closer to their wedding. This natural process is built on commitment to each other and to their relationship with God. But in this other dating relationship, emotions and commitments come and go. This is the lust of concupiscence.

We live in an era where it’s popular in the world to be just casual friends. Nobody is serious, not looking to get married. And often, it’s not just two young people; it’s a whole group of them. They’re just all together for the party of being together. Lots of time spent talking and interacting, playing, and hanging out. They are not serious but are independent and self-sufficient. We need to guard against this worldly spirit, walk in sanctification and honor, and live our lives with a purpose for God.

Beware of the snare of technology. There are many useful possibilities for technology. It’s used to communicate, but there’s an appropriate amount of communication. And with technology comes a challenge for parents to know who their children are communicating with. Text messaging, phone calls, and computers have been used by young people to be drawn into the world or leave home. Parents need to know what’s going on in their homes. Parents need to know the hearts of their children and stay connected. We won’t make it if we’re just trying to control technology. Young people, beware of slowly letting your guard down and letting emotions go when using your technology. It can be a snare of Satan to draw you into the lust of concupiscence.

Defrauding

“That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified” (1 Thessalonians 4:6).

Defraud means “to be covetous; to overreach.” To be covetous is “to want something that is somebody else’s, that is not rightfully mine.” To overreach is “to reach beyond what is mine.”

Defrauding is stealing a young girl’s heart without the consent of her parents. Stealing a young girl’s heart and causing her to do things she would never have done.

Defrauding is when a lady flaunts herself and causes men to lust after her. Young ladies, it matters how you carry yourself, how you dress, and how you walk. You can dress in a way that makes a man have to look the other way. That shouldn’t happen in the church. You should have concern and ask your mom, “What do you see in me? What does it look like when I walk?” Those are practical matters of modesty. We are more modest than what is going on in the world, but should we measure ourselves by the world’s standards? We should measure ourselves by God’s plan.

Defrauding means to overreach, to go beyond, to lead on. To deceive a person into giving up a valuable possession. On this topic, it’s deceiving someone to give up their valuable possession, their moral purity. Don’t let anybody get close to it. It’s a prized treasure!

Young ladies, be careful about being covetous and overreaching when thinking about life companions. I remember a time when there were three or four brokenhearted young ladies after a young man chose his life companion. These weren’t ungodly young ladies, but they let their emotions wander too far. Young ladies, you must stay yielded when considering life companions. Don’t be covetous, and let your heart begin to wander. Don’t let your emotions go in your mind, thinking that this is the will of God. If you set your heart on a certain one, you’re making yourself vulnerable to being hurt. If you have someone you admire, it is important that you surrender those thoughts to God. Remember, it is not confirmed as God’s will just because you have feelings in your heart.

To parents of young ladies, there’s a need for us to stay yielded right along with them. Don’t assume anything until the young man has actually asked for your daughter. I know from experience that God will help us discern His will. We may find ourselves on our faces, begging God, “Please tell me what is right.” But God will show us His will, one way or another. Don’t be covetous, letting your heart go in an area that’s beyond your control.

Not uncleanness, but holiness

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” 1 Thessalonians 4:7. Uncleanness is impurity. the

Greek word for sanctification is the same Greek word as holiness in this verse here. Don’t walk in uncleanness but walk in holiness.

“He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 4:8). He that despises, doesn’t despise man but God. Oh, the fool that would say, “I’m old enough to make my own decisions.” Don’t do it, don’t go that way.

In conclusion, let’s look at 2 Tim. 2:21-22. “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11-12). Abstain from them! Run away from them! They war against your soul! They are Satan’s snares for male and female.

*For God hath not called us
unto uncleanness,
but unto holiness.*

1 THESSALONIANS 4:7



The Constitution or the Bible

By Edward Martin
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We live in an era where the drumbeats of patriotism are beating louder and louder. Prominent Christian leaders are demanding their constitutional rights. The lines between the church and the state are slowly being blurred. The world is deliberately chipping away at the two-kingdom principle that is clearly taught in the New Testament, practiced by the early church, and revived by our Anabaptist forefathers during the Reformation. Yet the descendants of these very same Anabaptists are slowly surrendering ground to this drumbeat of patriotism.

To reinforce in our minds the Biblical value of separation from church and state, we want to look at the Bill of Rights and compare it with the New Testament.

The United States Bill of Rights is the first 10 amendments to the United States Constitution, adopted as a single unit in 1791. It constitutes a collection of guarantees of individual rights and limitations on federal and state governments. These amendments have binding legal force and are considered fundamental to American democracy.

In 1791, the United States Bill of Rights meant nothing to Anabaptists living in America. They were quietly living out their faith in a land where they were not being persecuted or martyred for their faith. But times have changed. The world, and more specifically, the nominal Christian world, is knocking at our doors. They are loudly clambering that Christians demand their rights.

Does the Christian have rights?

From which kingdom do they obtain their rights? From the Bible or the Constitution? Let's take a look.

First Amendment

Establishment Clause, Free Exercise Clause; freedom of religion, speech, the press, and assembly; the right to petition. (In this article, the Bill of Rights is truncated to capture the principle.)

What does the Bible say?

The Christian does not have the right to freedom of speech. He cannot say whatever he wants.

“But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:37).

A Christian is called to have virtuous speech.

“Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Titus 2:8).

Christians are called to preach.

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). “Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:60).

Christians may not have the right to exercise their

religion the way they want or to lawfully assemble.

“But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another . . . (Matthew 10:23).

Second Amendment

The right to have a militia (United States), to a Sovereign state, and right to keep and bear arms.

What does the Bible say?

Christians may not bear arms to defend themselves.

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight . . . (John 18:36).

We have weapons, but our weapons are not earthly.

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Fighting brings consequences.

“. . . he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword . . .” (Revelation 13:10).

Third Amendment

The right of protection from quartering of troops.

What does the Bible say?

The Christian is not only obliged to be subservient to our enemies but goes beyond what is required.

“But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;” (Matthew 5:39-44).

“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:9).

Fourth Amendment

The right of protection from unreasonable search and seizure.

What does the Bible say?

Is the servant greater than the Lord? If our Lord suffered cruel punishment, we should expect more.

“. . . The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20).

“And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the

elders. And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him. And they laid their hands on him, and took him" (Mark 14:43-46).

Fifth Amendment

The right to remain silent, due process, double jeopardy, self-incrimination, eminent domain.

What does the Bible say?

The Christian does not have the right to remain silent.

"But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak . . . What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" (Matthew 10:19, 27).

The Christian does not have the right to that which God made him steward over.

"And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also"(Matthew 5:40)

Everything belongs to God.

" . . . the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21).

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

Sixth Amendment

Trial by jury and rights of the accused; Confrontation Clause, speedy trial, public trial, right to counsel

Seventh Amendment

Civil trial by jury.

(In this study, we combined the Sixth Amendment with the Seventh Amendment since both are of a similar subject.)

What does the Bible say?

The Christian does not sue others at law. While the context here is a brother taking a brother to law, the same could apply to unbelievers.

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints" (1 Corinthians 6:1).

"For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Hebrews 10:34).

Eighth Amendment

Prohibition of excessive bail and cruel and unusual punishment.

What does the Bible say?

The Christian is promised cruel and unusual punishment.

"But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues" (Matthew 10:17).

Ninth Amendment

Protection of rights not specifically enumerated in the Constitution.

See below for the Christian's Bill of Rights

Tenth Amendment

Powers of States and People. The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

What does the Bible say?

The Christian's power does not come from the state. Christians have received power through the Holy Ghost by Jesus Christ himself.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Around the year 200, a Christian minister named Tertullian wrote, "Indeed, render to Caesar, money. Render to God, yourself. Otherwise, what will be God's if all are Caesar's?" Paraphrased in modern English, it would read: give your money to Caesar (the government) but give yourself to God. If you give both your money and yourself to Caesar, what is left for God?

What is the Christian's Bill of Rights?

The right to take up the Cross

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

"Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21).

The right to die to ourselves

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13).

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24).

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

The right to live otherworldly

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the

world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

The right to a Spirit-filled life

"And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:27).

"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:15-18).

The right to eternal life

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7).

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

Around the year 300, a pagan named Lucilius wrote, "It is virtue to give that which is really due to honor . . . That is, we should consider the interest of our country first, those of our parents should come next, and our own interests should be in the third and last place."

In response to this, Lactantius, an early Christian church teacher, wrote, "It is a virtue to restrain anger, to control desire, and to curb lust. For this is to flee from vice . . . If desire is restrained, no one will use violence by land or by sea. Nor will anyone lead an army to carry off and lay waste the property of others . . . It is not virtue, either, to be 'the enemy of the bad' or 'the defender of the good'. . . For what are the interests of our country, but the hardships of another state or nation? To extend the boundaries that are violently taken from others, to increase the power of the state, or to improve revenues. All of these things are not virtues, but the overthrowing of virtues." -- Antinice Fathers, 7.168, 169

To summarize, Lactantius is saying there is no virtue in patriotism.

To which kingdom do we belong?

If we belong to the kingdom of this world, we will abide by the revered document of this world, the US Constitution. We will fight for its principles with sword and gun and advocate for its candidates through activism and electioneering. We will align with its values in speech and by what we read. We belong to the world, and our final destination is already determined.

If we belong to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, we will abide by the values of the Bible. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God. We take up the cross of Jesus Christ, and him alone will we represent. Our speech and lifestyle will easily be distinguished as that of a Christian. We belong to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and our final destination is already determined.



COME, LET US TUNE OUR *loftiest song*

Come, let us tune our loftiest song
And raise to Christ our joyful strain;
Worship and thanks to Him belong,
Who reigns and shall forever reign.

His sovereign power our bodies made;
Our souls are His immortal breath;
And when His creatures sinned He bled
To save us from eternal death.

Burn, every breast with Jesus' love;
Bound every heart with rapturous joy;
And saints on earth, with saints above,
Your voices in His praise employ.

Extol the Lamb with loftiest song;
Prolong for Him your cheerful strain;
Worship and thanks to Him belong,
Who reigns and shall forever reign.

Robert A. West



Songs in the Night

Faith Sommers
Bangor, California

I have always enjoyed Anabaptist history but only recently heard that the early reformers, like Zwingli, didn't allow singing in their worship services. Praise God, their followers did not adhere to that idea.

Singing is one of the surest ways to cultivate a heart in step with the Creator, the one who made the morning stars sing for joy. Songs change the heart and the atmosphere.

Years ago, when the older children were young, we were having a rough morning. Nothing went well. I slipped out to the wash line to hang up clothes and to avoid my irritation spilling over the wee ones. As I often do, whether I'm sad, happy, weary, energized, or irritated, I started singing, not consciously, a little song we were teaching the toddlers. Suddenly the words stopped my frustration in mid-air.

"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine."

My light was not shining that morning, and I repented, determined that Satan would not blow out the feeble light of love and hope. Then I hurried inside, to beg my children's forgiveness and, once more, hold up the light.

More recently, I clung to my pillow one long, sad night, grieving things I could not change and weeping my prayers to God. In a few flashes of clarity, He gave me phrases to a song I hardly knew. But it was enough to calm my soul, and I rested in His love. The next day I found the words and memorized this beautiful song by Amy Carmichael:

Leave it to Me, child, leave it to Me;
Dearer thy garden to Me than to Thee,
Lift up thy heart, child, lift up thine eyes—
Naught can defeat Me, naught can surprise.

Leave it to Me, child, leave it to Me;
Trust in the wall of fire, look up and see
Stars in their courses shine through the night,
Both are alike to Me, darkness and light.

Leave it to Me, child, leave it to Me,
Let slip the burden too heavy for thee;
That which I will, My hand will perform,
Fair are the lilies that weather the storm.

All throughout the Bible, God's people sang. It must be part of our worship, personally and collectively. It's encouraging to read the Psalms and to sing the words as a prayer to God. Our family became used to creating tunes as we read. It is also powerful to pray the Word of God, and singing the Word is another way to glorify Him.

There is victory when we sing, and a song can be a prayer. Only last week I had exhausted my words of prayer after hours of solid beseeching our God and Helper. One day, as I laced my shoes to walk out the lane, I said, "God, I can't pray anymore. I am going to sing." And I fancied He patted my shoulder and whispered with a smile, "It's okay, My daughter. I love to hear you sing. Songs are also prayer."

In Revelation God promises heaven will be filled with glory—and music. And today, He covers our burdens with songs of hope, our sorrow with comfort, and our weariness with courage. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation" (Psalm 95:1).



The Christian in Election Year

Dave Sweigart

Peach Bottom, PA.

The title could give the impression that a Christian could be different in an election year than in off-election years. That is not the intent. Instead, in the time of national elections, Christians face extra pressure to become something they are not; pressure to join another kingdom and fight intellectually using the ballot box. Often during election years, the question is asked of the plain community – “Why don’t you vote? Aren’t Christians to be a salt and a light? Why don’t you use the power of voting and make a difference?”

Why do New Testament Christians abstain from the political process? Would there be times that we should vote because the candidates’ personalities, lifestyles, or views force us to get involved to preserve some kind of normalcy or status quo? In the past forty-plus years, mainstream Christianity has made forays into the political world. Has there been a cultural revival stemming from the efforts of the Moral Majority or the Christian Coalition? It seems obvious that there has not been; in fact, cultural shifting away from the Judeo-Christian foundation of yesteryear seems to be in vogue.

A study of this type focuses on the two-kingdom concept under the umbrella of the doctrine of nonresistance. Our traditional Anabaptist system of church life is based on this doctrine of the two kingdoms – the kingdom of Christ versus the kingdom of this world. Out of this flow, are the doctrines of separation (nonconformity) and non-resistance. We sometimes use the term nonresistance to explain our non-participation in the political world. Still, a clearer understanding is given when we characterize it as being a part of one kingdom versus the other.

Some Scripture verses that give us the foundation for the two-kingdom principle include -

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight . . .” (John 18:36).

“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not

of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14-16).

Hebrews 11:9 tells us that [Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country. The strange country here means “not one’s own, foreign.” Verse 10 says, “He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” By this we understand if he was looking for a city, he was not at home where he was. A similar thought is expressed in Philippians 3:20, “For our conversation [our conduct, our citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Second Corinthians 5:20 introduces the example of ambassadorship: “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

What is an ambassador? Several definitions could be given:

Diplomatic – they are the top-ranking representative of their own country to the host country in which they are stationed; representing their state in meetings and delivering messages on behalf of their own government to the host government.

Ceremonial – They represent their own government to the people of the host nation at public events and are the most visible symbol of their own country, within the host country.

Administrative - Being the top-ranking official within the embassy at which they are posted, overseeing operations at the embassy and other diplomats and staff members.

Every Christian has an important diplomatic job here and now. Ambassadorships are critical appointments, only conferred on those who can accurately represent the ideals, laws, people, culture, policies, political ideologies, and interests of the country where the ambassador holds citizenship. They must also possess sound judgment. If an ambassador fails to uphold all these standards, he can

disqualify himself from representing his country—and be recalled from his post!

Any nation’s representative knows that as ambassador to any other country, he cannot participate in that country’s politics. He is a citizen of a different nation. He participates in the politics of the nation he represents. He also cannot fight for the country to which he is sent. If he does either of these he loses his citizenship at home. In fact, he would be considered a traitor. This clearly indicates our role as Christians in our host country of the United States or wherever our earthly citizenship resides.

The question could be asked: do we, as Christians have dual citizenship? Can we be citizens of the kingdom of God and citizens of this world at the same time? When an ambassador represents his own country to a foreign one, he has dual citizenship, but his work focuses on the host nation’s needs. So it is for the Christian - he cannot completely avoid the earthly, but his eye focuses on the eternal. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate

the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). So, while in a sense, he is a dual citizen, God’s kingdom takes priority. If the worldly kingdom takes precedence, he loses his citizenship in God’s kingdom.

So what are some more reasons why the true Christian is not involved in politics? On which side is God? As Christians, we need to stay close to God’s will and not knowingly organize or promote something against His divine will. “And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Daniel 2:21). “This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Daniel 4:17).

Sometimes God may be on the side that we would not



think or desire. In Jeremiah 27, God is telling Jeremiah that an enemy nation will take possession of Judah. God is giving all Judah's lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, my servant. If Judah does not submit, God will punish them. God's clear intent was for a regime change. In verse 14, he warns of prophets that will say – "Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you." If God wills a regime change in this country, should we vote against Him?

Politics and political operations are a part of this world, even in a "Christian" nation. We could ask: Is the United States a Christian nation? The answer is no. There is no "most favored nation status" with God. This country is on the same tier to God as Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Mexico. We recognize that we do experience blessings because of the Christian principles that influenced its founding and subsequent manners and customs. When any group or nation upholds Bible principles, God can bless it. But because a nation is a worldly thing, a part of this world's kingdom, it cannot be a godly thing.

The tension with the world is lost when you become part of the political "machine." This brings about a complete loss of the separation principle. God's people are to ". . . come out from among them and be ye separate . . ." (2 Corinthians 6:17). Involvement in politics means alienating a segment of people. One side condemns the actions of the other side. That closes us off to them - hindering our witness. We need to have a people focus – not a nation focus; a focus on souls - not social betterment.

Politics aim at the controversial and specific, not on foundational and substantial - symbolism over substance. In 2003 Alabama's judicial ethics panel removed Chief Justice Roy Moore from office for defying a federal judge's order to move a Ten Commandments monument from the state Supreme Court building. While we share the justice's concerns for the lack of respect for the Ten Commandments, the monument itself is a small issue when compared to the monument of monstrous, flagrant disobedience to all of God's commands all around us. Focusing on hot-button issues like the stone ten commandments, abortion, school prayer, gay marriage, and LGBTQ rights, misses the point. Changing the law does not change the heart.

Politics equal power and power struggles. How does this line up with the stranger/pilgrim concept? Politics require compromise. Negotiating and compromising with Labor Unions and political donors of all stripes. Society does not change from the top down, but from the bottom up; through repentance, and revival – one soul at a time.

What are the defining characteristics of a Christian during the election season? Separation and the two-kingdom concept lived out in daily life. To have a standard of non-participation in politics and then fail to live out

separation from the world in my daily life will define us as part of the worldly kingdom even if I separate from its politics. Pleading separation from politics while living as the world will prove hypocritical and counterproductive to our Christian witness. We should strive to be apolitical (having no interest in politics, or not concerned with politics). There is not a political party that we identify with or are comfortable with as opposed to another. We are not silent Republicans or Democrats; we are representatives of the kingdom of Christ.

If we become casual or ambivalent toward light versus darkness, or the kingdom of Christ versus this evil world, or brotherhood versus neighborhood, we will open ourselves to the political process in one of two ways:

By becoming militaristic. They then will engage in what they call "just war." Even though war is usually wrong, it is justifiable because of extenuating circumstances.

By becoming pacifistic. Efforts are made to force the state to operate under NT principles like turning the other cheek, abstaining from the sword (i.e., capital punishment,) or unjust wars. They try to force peace (oxymoron) using the power of government. This would include operations like "Occupy Wall Street," Peace demonstrations, Marches on Washington, marches for minority rights, and various other pro and con social agitations involving inequalities and economic injustices. Both (militaristic & pacifistic) indicate a loss of separation and an embrace of this world's kingdom.

Christians need to pray during election year. But do we find it hard to know how to pray about the nation or election? Is it enough to simply pray that "your will be done"? We do want God's will to be done in everything, even if there is an alternative that may bring us pain. But how do we pray for elections? What does the Bible say? "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:1,2). This is an example of defensive prayer of thanksgiving for the blessings we have under this administration, whether it is giving us blessing or bane. But how do we pray offensively? Or do we pray "for something"? But we need to be careful not to "vote" on our knees!

We need to pray for the salvation of the souls of leaders.

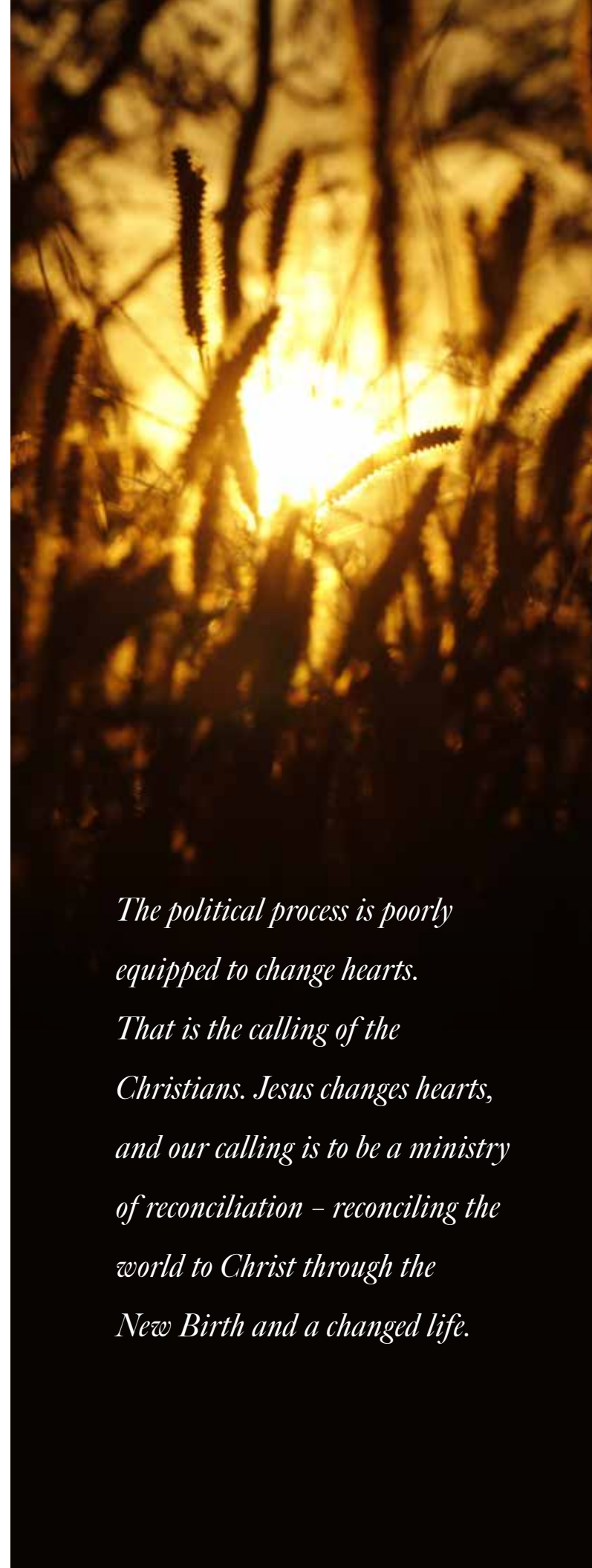
We need to pray for truth and righteousness to prevail.

We need to pray for a national revival.

We need to pray that God would give political leaders wisdom.

We need to pray that wickedness, immorality, and lawlessness would be diminished.

What about our speech during election year. How do we talk about it? We need to have a testimony and not be



The political process is poorly equipped to change hearts.

That is the calling of the Christians. Jesus changes hearts,

and our calling is to be a ministry of reconciliation – reconciling the

world to Christ through the New Birth and a changed life.

afraid to share it. (1Pe 3:8-17) But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: (1Peter 3:15).

Can a two-kingdom, separated Christian be outspoken about political issues? Our speech determines our kingdom loyalty. For us, a testing question may be this: do I speak differently about our leader depending who is president – politically conservative president versus a politically liberal?

How do I know if I am too involved with the other kingdom? If I am having a bad day because of an election or even a Gallup poll, I am too involved and need to stop paying so much attention to the news. If I am a reader and my library is filled with war and political stories and very little biblical/ Christian life studies, it may mean that I need to refocus – which kingdom do I really want to be a part of? Of course, when we start to look, talk, and act like them - I am showing my true colors. Is my speech around election time bearing witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or is it showing that I really have my heart tuned to the political process?

Is the answer then to know nothing? (Incidentally, there was a political party in 1856 known as the Know-Nothings!) No. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves (Matt 10:16). While there is obviously a danger in a Christian losing his ambassadorship because he is involving himself politically, it is an asset for him to have a working knowledge and understanding of the political times in which he lives. He knows that politics in the world shape the world that Christians live. Let us be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

How should true Christians relate to elections and governments? The old adage is still true: Pray. Pay. Obey. Also, Christians relate best by being separate from it. Lot's righteousness had little effect on Sodom even though he had the prominent position of a city leader. There are too many Anabaptists who try to vote in righteous leaders while being addicted to NASCAR, the NFL, and many other types of entertainment provided by the god of this world. May God help us to stay far away from these things.

The political process is poorly equipped to change hearts. That is the calling of the Christians. Jesus changes hearts, and our calling is to be a ministry of reconciliation – reconciling the world to Christ through the New Birth and a changed life. JESUS IS THE ANSWER! We need to be a light in this dark world. In this election season, let us not miss our calling by getting distracted by the political processes. Let us not lose our focus or our light. Let the glory of Jesus shine through us in election year and every day!

Lead On, O King Eternal

Joel A Hostetler
Coshocton, OH

Once again we will be taking a look at the history behind one of our beloved hymns. These hymns of old have stood the test of time and are worth singing, and may they continue to be sung till time is no more! Out of the hundreds of songs that the old-time hymn writers have written, only a handful remain today. These "tried and true" pieces of history continue to bless our congregations on every Lord's day morning, as we lift our voices to sing the lines that our forefathers have sung for generations.

The hymn history for this issue, unlike some of the others we've looked at, is not born out of deep grief, catastrophic experiences, or dramatic conversions. Rather, it is the heartfelt cry of a godly young man as he finished his studies and was ready to enter his calling as a minister of the gospel. "Lead On, O King Eternal," is the exclamation of my heart as well, seeing the current state of the world and our own country. May we never forget that this world's system is not eternal. It is passing away, and we as followers of Christ have been called out of this world to follow the King Eternal, whose kingdom will never end!

Ernest W. Shurtleff was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on April 4, 1862. In 1887, after he spent much time studying and preparing, he was ready to begin his ministry. His classmates at Andover Theological Seminary, recognizing the poetic ability of their colleague, asked him to write a hymn that they might all sing together for their commencement service. Shurtleff responded with this excellent text, and together, they sang this song for the first time. At the time of his graduation, he had already published two volumes of verses, and throughout his later ministry wrote a number of additional hymns.

Our hymn writer was truly the embodiment of the hymn he wrote. Before moving to Europe, he served as a minister in Congregational churches in Ventura, California; Old Plymouth, Massachusetts; and Minneapolis, Minnesota. In 1905, he established the American Church in Frankfurt, Germany, and in 1906, he moved to Paris, France, where he was involved in student ministry at the Academy Vitti.

When World War I broke out, Ernest and his wife remained in Paris to help with relief work. But he did not live to see the war end. He passed away there in 1917 at the young age of 55. Ernest published a number of literary works during the course of his life His most enduring work is, "Lead On, O King Eternal."

The hymn was first published in the graduation program of Andover Theological Seminary and then appeared in Hymns of Faith in 1890. The future of the hymn text was assured when it was included in The Hymnal 1895, published by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The text was paired with a variety of tunes. In 1905 it was paired with the tune "Lancashire" by London composer Henry Smart and appeared for the first time in The Methodist Sunday School Hymnal 1911. By 1930, "Lead On, O King Eternal" appeared almost exclusively with the tune "Lancashire" in the United States.

One interesting note about this hymn is that the tune we know today was written 52 years before the song. "Lancashire," the tune for "Lead On, O King Eternal," was originally composed in 1835 for a festival celebrating the 300th anniversary of the English Reformation. It was published in a leaflet for the occasion and was set to the words "From Greenland's Icy Mountains." The tune was named after the county Lancashire, where its composer worked at the time of its origin. Seventy years later, the tune was paired with the words for "Lead On, O King Eternal" in The Methodist Hymnal.

Henry Smart was born in England in 1813. Though he studied some music with his father, he was largely self-taught. Originally, Henry chose to study for a law degree. However, he eventually changed course and decided to pursue a career in music. He developed a reputation as a gifted musician, and he served as the organist at a number of leading London churches.

Henry struggled with poor eyesight for a number of years before he became almost totally blind around 1865. This infirmity was hard for him. However, he continued

playing by memory. He continued to make contributions to the field of music for the next 14 years till 1879, when he passed away at the age of 66. During the course of his life, Henry published and worked as the musical editor for several collections of music. He also composed a number of other works — the tunes for "Angels from the Realms of Glory" and "Lead On, O King Eternal" are among his most familiar to us today.

Let us conclude this with a wonderful and comforting verse from the last book of the Bible.

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." Revelation 11:15

Sourced from 101 hymn stories, Hymnary.org

Ernest W. Shurtleff, 1887

1. Lead on, O King e - ter - nal, The day of march has come;
2. Lead on, O King e - ter - nal, Till sin's fierce war shall cease,
3. Lead on, O King e - ter - nal, We fol - low, not with fears,

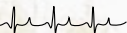
Henry T. Smart, 1835

Hence - forth in fields of con - quest Thy tents shall be our home:
And ho - li - ness shall whis - per The sweet a - men of peace:
For glad - ness breaks like morn - ing Wher - e'er Thy face ap - pears:

Thru days of prep - a - ra - tion Thy grace has made us strong,
For not with swords, loud clash - ing, Nor roll of stir - ring drums,
Thy cross is lift - ed o'er us; We jour - ney in its light;

And now, O King e - ter - nal, We lift our bat - tle song.
But deeds of love and mer - cy, The heav'n - ly king - dom comes.
The crown a - waits the con - quest; Lead on, O God of might. A - men.


The Heartbeat of



The Remnant

c/o The Berean Voice
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He that hath an ear,
let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;
To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life,
which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Revelation 2:7