



POST-ELECTION STATEMENT

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The election, at long last, is over.

As fellow believers, we offer to our new leaders the pledge of our prayers and our commitment to be good citizens in this wonderful land that the Lord has privileged us to live in.

In this moment as I talk with you, I do not know the results of the election because this was recorded prior to the election. I wanted to bring these comments to you without knowing who won – because our responsibilities as Christians transcend politics – and we must be who we are regardless of who wins.

The first century Christians lived in a time far different than ours. The government was a repressive dictatorship. Life was cheap. Slavery was practiced. Infanticide was common. Romans chapter one outlines the steep and deep degradation morally and ethically in the prevailing culture.

Christians then, unlike us, did not have the right to vote. In fact, throughout the first 200 plus years of the Church, Christians were a persecuted minority.

Yet, those early Christians turned the world upside down and right side up. How did they do it? Through the ballot box? No. Through electing leaders that were preferential to their point of view? No.

They changed the world by being what Jesus called them to be – salt and light.

I must confess that during these past long months of electioneering, I let the externals of politics take too much of my time and interest. Perhaps you did as well. It's easy to get so overly absorbed in politics that we lose sight of the fact that our citizenship is really in heaven – that governments, presidents, senators, and political leaders come and go – but the kingdom of God lasts forever.

I am not saying that we should not be involved, as citizens, in political issues; but I think it is vital that we keep perspective. Our focus should be more on winning people to Jesus than winning elections. We need to be more concerned about the progress of the Gospel than the progress of a political party.

I want to call you to refocus on the health of the church – that the real answers to eternal issues lie not in the government – but in a revitalized body of believers that transforms neighborhoods and communities through our witness in word and deed.

The apostles told the first century Christians five things.

1. God is the sovereign Lord over human history and government.

In Romans 13, Paul wrote: *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*

This admonition applies to any Christian living in any country at any time period – whether in China, Uganda, Cuba, Russia, India, Nigeria, or the United States.

But, what does it mean that the authorities that exist have been established by God? Exactly what you think it says. God raises up nations and leaders.

The results of this election did not catch God by surprise. Although we voted, nothing happens without God's permissive will. He allows us to choose good or evil and, in a democracy, the government He gives us is the one we choose. Sometimes our vote results in leaders who fail us and they become a means of God's judgment; other times leaders follow after God's heart and they become a means of God's blessing.

Daniel said to the unrighteous world ruler, Nebuchadnezzar: *the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men* (Daniel 4:17). To the unrighteous ruler, Pilate, governor of Judea, Jesus said: *You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above* (John 19:11).

So, as we come out of this election as Christians, we must catch our breath and pause. We must put on our Biblical glasses and see Jesus as the Lord of human history. If the early Christians could flourish under a persecuting totalitarian government, then in America we Christians have even more reason to flourish because of the democratic system that gives us the freedom of speech, assembly, and worship.

2. The second advice the apostles gave was that **government is designed to restrain and punish those who do evil.**

Read Romans 13:3-4 or 1 Peter 2:13-17. In fact, Paul calls human government God's servant to do good by bringing punishment on the wrongdoer. The word he employs for servant is the same word that elsewhere is translated as deacon. Those in civil government are meant to be God's deacons. They are to approve what is right, and disapprove what is wrong; and thereby serve the cause of justice. Of course, if they fail in their task then the society and culture that they represent crumbles. Paul's view was that the Roman dictatorship, as bad as it was, was preferable to anarchy. When there is no government, everyone does what is right in his or her own eyes.

If you don't believe that, then remove government totally from your community for just seven days – all kinds of mayhem to person and property would occur.

3. None of us necessarily like the third counsel given to early Christians – but, if you look in Romans 13:6-7 you'll find it: ***if you owe taxes, pay taxes!*** Need I say more? Without taxes, the government cannot provide the duty it owes citizens to keep them safe from harm.

4. That brings us to the fourth counsel the apostles gave to Christians living under any desirable or undesirable government – **pray!** Paul writes this to his younger colleague, Timothy: *I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – the kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness* (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

So let's do what Paul asks. Let's offer to God both intercession and thanksgiving for those elected to office. Why? Not because our candidate lost or won – but because, the Lord hears our prayers and it's His desire that we have the kind of governmental climate which permits us to flourish as the followers of Christ. Look at what Paul says in the next verses from 1 Timothy 2 (verses 3 and

4): *This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.* In other words, a government that provides peace for Christians makes for an environment in which the church can multiply.

The apostle Paul gave the counsel to pray in the face of a looming threat of persecution. He asked the church to pray that the oppressive and persecuting hand of the government would be stayed. And, early Christians kept praying for that even in the midst of fierce opposition and martyrdoms.

We may be inching into a day in America when Christians no longer have the favored status they have enjoyed. Increasingly, the secular culture seeks to marginalize followers of Jesus, hold them up to caricature, and portray them in the most unfair manner possible. There may come a day in America when believers face outright persecution. So, we must continue to pray that the Lord will help America to preserve its freedoms; and that, resulting from our freedoms, we may continue to see Christ's kingdom grow in America; and, that from our land will come a powerful awakening that results in world-wide revival.

5. We are to show respect for those who hold office – whether executive, judicial, or legislative; whether national, state, or local; whether Republican, Democrat, Independent, or other parties. The New Testament explicitly tells us to do that. Hear the Apostle Paul: *Give everyone what you owe him . . . if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor* (Romans 13:7). Hear the Apostle Peter say the same thing: *Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king* (1 Peter 2:17).

Obviously, in America we do not have a king. But, we have a president and we have a governmental system that has three branches nationally – and these three branches also form state and local governments. We are to honor those who hold positions of authority.

As Christians, we must set the example for being respectful to those in office – whether executive, judicial, or legislative.

The recent campaign at all levels and all parties was often filled with bitter rancor, distortions, smears and lies. That must not be a part of Christian's behavior. We must not lose our principles when fighting for principle.

As believers, we can help set a better tone for the national discussion. We can hold to our views without being unkind, without rancorous voices, without becoming filled with anger or hatred toward those with opposing views.

Our ultimate goal as Christians is not to win an election, but to win people to Jesus. We will only win those whom we clearly love, and for whom we show love.

Now that the campaigns are over, let the real campaign begin. Let's win America for Jesus! Let's pray that the Lord will send to America a Great Spiritual Awakening – that from sea to shining sea, the glory of the Lord will break forth in the lives of our fellow citizens. May God bless America as America blesses God!