

Christians And Politics

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I would like to piggyback on something Mark Schindler said in his sermon last week ["We Must Work for What We Believe"]. Joe Baity and I must have had the same idea here, thinking about the sermon from last week. Mark Schindler asked, toward the beginning of his sermon:

Brethren, how often do we place ourselves, either on one side or the other of the untenable solutions of men, and align ourselves with those who may even be of carnal, lofty character, living according to what may be noble character traits but still within the slavery of sin? . . . God's standards—and those standards alone—must be driving our lives right now as we prepare for Christ's return.

Admittedly, achieving this ideal—that is, achieving the standards of God—is quite difficult to do, and perhaps it is even harder for us in this time than it has ever been for anyone on earth. I say that because we are constantly inundated by a flood of information from the media. We can hardly keep it out, and all of that media—all of that information we are getting—is completely human in origin. Whether it is from the Right, from the Left, from the Center—it doesn't matter. Everything we are getting is human philosophy, human belief, human ideas, and not endorsed by God and Jesus Christ.

So, whether we watch the BBC, PBS, CNN, MSNBC, FOX News or some other media outlet biased to the right, left, or center, *all* the information and editorial comment is biased by carnal perspectives toward carnal solutions—their own, human ideas about how we can solve these things. Not one of them pushes godly solutions. They are not saying, "Turn in your Bibles to this scripture, and this is what Jesus tells us to do." They are saying to go to

some philosopher or some politician and saying, "This is what this person wants us to do," or "This is what we should do," or "This is what history teaches us we should do."

We need to be very careful when espousing the viewpoints or the beliefs that arise out of this world. We are not of this world, and we have to constantly remind ourselves that we are not of this world. Our opinions and our positions that we take on what is occurring in this world should also not be of this world. Our opinions need to be of what have their origins in God.

I want to tell you right now, many of you know that I watch news pretty avidly, and I tend to be pretty conservative in my viewpoint, but I am preaching to myself, too, because I am as guilty of this as any.

Years ago, back in the 80s when I was a young man—that was a long time ago, when Ronald Reagan was president—I remember golfing with my dad and Mike Ford one day. As we were going after our balls down a fairway, Mike made a comment to us that was essentially, "Most church members side with Republicans, wouldn't you say?" It was a true observation then and probably just as true today. Most church members tend to look on things, on politics, from a Republican viewpoint. That is not true for everyone, but it is probably more true than not. Conservative principles that some Republicans articulate and advocate *are* closer to traditional Christian values.

But let's be honest, neither Republicanism nor conservatism (which are not the same thing, by the way) are godly. Jesus did not have an "-R" after His last name—"Jesus Christ-R, from Nazareth." That's not how He was. Simon Peter was not a conservative. That's just not how it was. As I said, these beliefs—Republicanism, conservatism—are *closer* to godliness than what progressives and Leftists are cramming down our throats these days, but Republicanism and conservatism are a pale shadow of the truth of what the Bible teaches. They are not even close. And even worse, to my mind, I've noticed a fair number of church kids, most of them twentysomethings, who have taken up the banner of liberals like Bernie Sanders—and I've got to believe (because I tend to be optimistic) that they are just responding to the conditioning that they received in public schools.

And I've seen others—many older, mature members of God's church who have been in the church for a quarter century or more—go all-in for Donald Trump, as if he can do no wrong, as if he were chosen by God to return this country to its Constitutional foundation. They will defend him to the hilt. I've seen it on social media. And it doesn't matter what he says or what he does, even though he has done some bone-headed things and done some doozies in his 200 or so days in office! Neither one of these is good for a Christian.

Now, I'm not saying that we should not follow politics or even that we should not have our opinions or hopes about what needs to happen within the nation. I *am* saying, though, that we fall short as Christians—as followers of Jesus Christ—when we follow anyone or anything other than Jesus Christ. Likewise, when we support a belief or support an action that Jesus Himself would not support, that, too, is falling short. We have been called to conform to Him, or to be transformed into His image, as fully as possible, as we can in this physical life. We have not been called to shoe-horn *Him* into *our* position, or to remake Him into some kind of American/British/Canadian/Australian/German/French/etc., Jesus. He is Jesus, period, for all Christians and for all people. Neither have we been called to just follow Him on the Sabbath, and the rest of the week we can go ahead and be our political selves. We have been called to be like Him all the time, and about His beliefs.

So, what happened in Charlottesville, Virginia, last weekend was wrong. It was terrible what happened there, and sinful as all get out. Trump was right—there is plenty of blame and wrong on both sides of the issue here. The Neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan and all those people on Alt-Right who believe like they do are hateful bigots! That's what they are! But you know, the other side has demonstrated that it is just as hateful and bigoted, just coming from the other direction! The media—those ones that we listen to, and I don't know why—seem to be trying to convince us that one kind of hatred and bigotry is wrong but another kind is just fine—in fact, that other kind of hatred and bigotry is not just acceptable but commendable and we should all follow it! It is stupid. It is hypocritical. But we have to be careful because that is the way that Satan, though the media, is trying to get us to change to be what he wants us to be. But *we* are followers of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ favors neither side in this because both sides are promoting ungodly beliefs and using sinful means to get their way! Jesus isn't going to back something like that. We should try our best, with the knowledge and the experience that we have and the inspiration of God, to see things from His perspective and should try to stay as far away from such partisan squabbles as we can.

Proverbs 22:3 and Amos 5:13 both tell us that the prudent man sees these things coming, and in Proverbs 22:3 it says that he takes refuge (or, hides himself). Amos 5:23 says that the prudent man keeps silent because these days are evil. He doesn't get down and dirty in the riots.

Jesus, as an example, about to be condemned to death in the biggest sham of a trial that has ever occurred, did not stoop to politics or to violence, despite having the power to do so. Did He not say He could command twelve legions of angels to do His will? Instead, He said,

John 18:36 “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”

He took the high road, did He not? He took the godly position and said, "This must be done. It is not our time." This must be our position too. Despite living in it, we are not of this world. Our kingdom is not of this world, as Jesus said. It is not our time to fight, to take sides, even though the outcome of the political wrangling in our nations is beginning to affect us negatively and we have been promised they will only get worse. It is going to be hard to hold back. But we have always got to uphold our understanding that we are not of this world, and that we are followers of Jesus Christ. Besides, we have enough on our plate in preparing for the Kingdom of God. So do that.