

Why We Do Not Vote

Our Fight Is Not Political

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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Many of you may have read my CGG Weekly essay from yesterday, "Why We Do Not Vote." I decided after writing that essay that it would probably make a good sermon. Besides that, when would I have the chance to have the sermon on the Sabbath before the next national election? The chances of that happening are maybe about one in three, and it would be about two years down the road. So, I thought that this would be a pretty good opportunity to talk about this particular doctrine.

I would like to preface my remarks a bit with the fact that I am a "news junkie." Really, a "news talk junkie." I keep the radio on almost all the time from the time that I wake up, until the time get to work. I am constantly listening to the news.

And then when I get to work, I am reading the news because David [Grabbe] and I share interesting things that happen in the news. So, I am looking at news usually up to about noon, every day during the week. When you do that, you really cannot avoid the American political scene, especially now because so much of the news that is happening here in the U.S. has to do with the upcoming election on Tuesday. So, I am almost forced to keep an ear tuned to the American political scene.

I think it plays a small role—some may believe it is a larger role—in watching world events (watching what is going on) because what happens in the American political scene these days (given the fact that America is the world super power) affects the whole world.

So, what America does is indicative of the things that will be happening six months, one year, two years, five years down the road. And, most of you know that America is maybe the last bastion of what we would probably call conservatism in the entire world.

The rest of the world has been taken over by the philosophy of multiculturalism, and the ideas that have come through a distortion of Western civilization. The whole world has been corrupted by these ideas that are making this world lurch toward the time of the end. And so, if we see the political scene in the United States moving in a certain direction, we can get a small gauge on what is happening, how long it will be, and that sort of thing.

I am not saying that we should not watch what is happening in this country on the

political scene. But getting involved in politics is another matter.

Overall, I think the news in the past few years, including the run-up to this election, has been rather alarming. We have a very critical Senate race here in North Carolina—former Clinton henchman, Erskine Bowles, versus former President Bush appointee, Elizabeth Dole (on the Republican side). But regardless of their part (whether Republican or Democrat), their campaign platforms are almost identical with small differences here and there. They are both pretty much moderate to liberal. They are certainly not like Jesse Helms—the one they are trying to replace—who is maybe the most conservative member of Congress over the past 10 years.

And so, the politics of North Carolina are going to change. The politics of the federal level will change, and I just have to shake my head that there is no one in this race that is thinking about conservative issues. Things that would hold the line on morality, or hold the line on "big brother," let us say. Just to put it into a term that we all know.

Also alarming, just this past week, was that so-called "memorial" for Paul Wellstone up there in Minnesota. It turned into a political rally! And you hear all across this nation, people just complaining. Because I would imagine maybe a small majority of Americans in this country still hold some sort of values in terms of respect for the dead, for people in office, and a respect for those who are grieving. From what I heard yesterday, this entire "memorial service" was planned—down to the word—in Washington by the Democratic National Committee because they knew that they were going to have national coverage on this service. So they scripted the entire thing! They wanted to take this opportunity to make political statement—to have a rally.

They booed Trent Lott (R. Mississippi) the Senate minority leader, just simply because he was there. What respect was there for his office? None. Jesse Ventura, the Minnesota governor, stormed out. He was appalled. He is no rightist. He told the Democrats, "If you win this election, I am not appointing a Democrat to finish out Wellstone's term. I'll get my garbage man to do it. You don't deserve it."

That is the condition of the whole nation. Everything has become political. Everything is a matter of power. And, I do not know if you heard, but there is a long list of alleged fraudulent behavior by the Democrats in order to swing the election in their favor.

And, it is not just New Jersey where they put in Lautenberg in contradiction to the New Jersey electoral law there. I do not know if you heard that in Minnesota they went to the Minnesota Supreme Court and had them waive a law that said that you could not do away with the absentee ballots this close to the election and reprint them, and resend

them. But, they did away with the law so now all these absentee ballots are null and void. It is well known that absentee ballots tend to favor Republicans because they are the ones out actually working, and out of town a lot of times on business traveling.

The same thing happened in Florida a couple of years ago in the Bush/Gore fiasco down there.

So, things like this—just shenanigans, machinations, and behind the scenes, under the table types of deals being worked out—makes us look like a third-world country. I mean, Saddam Hussein, just within the past two weeks, won "100% of the vote" over there in Iraq. The things that we are doing here in America are similar to what one would expect in a place like that.

Did you know that we are going to have some Russian and Ukrainian observers? They are coming over here to observe our election in Florida to make sure that it is fair! That is shameful! I just have to shake my head to see this once-proud nation going down the tubes because we do not even have a modicum of righteousness anymore. We are willing to do whatever it takes to gain power just like the despots of old, and the tyrants of now.

When you see these things, it makes some people want to do something about it; to step in and stop this tide of evil from overtaking the land. You want to make a difference in this society.

Even Jerry Falwell wrote in an e-mail that I received on Friday morning, "I believe it is inexcusable for Christians to fail to vote during an election." He went on to say something like, *"If all the Christians out there would just vote, we could just turn this country around in one election."* It may be somewhat true. Maybe. But, maybe not.

You know it is considered un-American to not vote; a right we have that has become, in many people's eyes, a duty. But, you know even though they say that, the percentage of Americans that actually vote has been going down steadily over the years. So, even though there is a lot of talk about doing something about this, the American people are not doing anything really. They are just letting it happen.

But what about true Christians? We live here in this country, and we see what is going on, and we want to be able to help.

We have a doctrine in the church, though, established by Herbert W. Armstrong years ago—I do not know when it actually came out, but it has been many decades—that the

people of the church should refrain from voting. Once again, a doctrine of the church puts us directly at odds with mainstream Christianity and Americans at large. And when people are set apart like that, and made to look different, they feel strange, odd; they feel like they are out of things.

So why do we not vote? This is what I hope to answer today. What was the thinking process that led to this decision?

Voting by Christians is one of those modern practices like jury duty, or the use of contraception, or smoking that the Bible says little or nothing about. The only thing about smoking in the Bible is that, "Rebecca 'lit off her camel.'" [That is an old COG joke.]

But really, the Bible says nothing about smoking. It really says nothing about contraception. Jury duty was never a thing that ever happened in the ancient times when the Bible was written. And, voting never really ever occurred except in Greece. And the Bible does not contemplate what the Greeks did. It never happened in Israel.

So, these are issues that we must have answers to out of God's Word, because they affect us very frequently. I get called every two years for jury duty. I have to know what the Bible says. But, it does not say anything specifically about jury duty, so we have to come up with some way of answering this from the Bible, because that is what we stand on. That is God's Word. If we cannot find it in here, where are we going to find the truth?

It would have to be from our own heads. And who is going to trust that? We do not even trust what we think. We must have the solid and firm foundation of the truth to base these doctrines upon; doctrines that concern things that we do—practices—that the Bible says nothing about directly.

So, how do we go about answering such questions?

Let us start in Matthew 5. For the first part of this sermon I would like to take you through a little bit of the process of how we come to these types of decisions. And then, we will go into voting itself. These will be common scriptures that we use frequently.

Matthew 5:17-18 Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

Matthew 5:20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

This is where we have to start. This is the foundational sermon of Jesus Christ—the foundational teaching—that gives us our understanding of how New Testament Christianity works. So, this Sermon on the Mount is awfully important.

Now Jesus says here, very plainly in verse 17 that the law is still in force. I do not see how the Protestants can get around this statement, but they try. "I did not come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets, but to fulfill," meaning, He did something positive.

The "fulfill" part we can think of it in terms of expanding upon it. "Filled to the full," we used to say, as if it were a jar that we had only a little bit of something in. But, when He came, He filled it all the way to the top. He expanded our understanding and application of these things.

Without Him coming, we would be back with "Thus saith the Lord," would we not? We did not know how to make these applications of principle until He came and showed us how.

And so, one of the most important things that He did when He came was to give us what we call "the spirit of the law." It opens our understanding of how the very laws of the Old Testament ("Thus saith the Lord...") apply to situations that they do not seem to apply to in their letter—in just their strict wording. But the strict wording encapsulates a principle that we can then take and apply to different situations that may not have ever been contemplated during the times in which it was written. And so, we are able to come up with doctrinal statements that apply the "thus saith the Lord," to these particular situations.

So, this is the spirit of the law. And, obviously it must be more than the strict letter because He says in verse 20 that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and that is how they worked. That was their methodology. If it did not say, "thus saith the Lord," then they felt that they were free to do it.

Verse 20 is a big hint that we are to go beyond the letter of the law into the realm of the spirit of the law by applying the principles that are in the letter into the broader expanse of our own lives.

Beginning in verse 21, all the way to the end of the chapter, Jesus gives us several examples—at least 5—of how we do this. He starts right out, "You've heard of old times that it was said, 'You shall not murder.'"

And then He shows us how the "Thou shalt not murder" covers much broader territory than simply, "Bang, bang! You're dead!" It covers hatred. It covers matters of simply not liking a person. It covers areas of insult and injury. It covers what is up here in the mind beyond what we do with our bodies. It covers intent. That was the Sixth Commandment.

The Seventh Commandment is covered from verse 27 through verse 32. Then, He talks about "oaths," in verse 33, which is part of the Ninth Commandment. So you see, already in about 15 verses or so, He has covered three commandments and given us good instruction—a template, if you will—of how to apply the spirit of the law.

Then He goes on to statutes and judgments—"an eye for an eye." How do you apply "an eye for an eye" in the New Testament Christian setting? And then in verse 43 is the overall principle to "love your neighbor," and He expands upon that. How many times in His ministry did people ask Him, "Is this my neighbor?" In this one section here, He gives us just about everything that we need to apply that principle. Very broadly, He shows us how it works.

Verse 48 is basically a summation of everything we need to know to apply the spirit of the law:

Matthew 5:48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

In a nutshell, He is saying that you apply the law by asking yourself, "How would God decide this question?" In the modern times, we have the phrase, "What would Jesus do?" This is Jesus' own version of that. What would the Father do? How would the Father decide? How does He think? It is as if we are coming before God asking, "God, people have asked if Christians can vote in the upcoming election. What do you think? How do you rule? What is your teaching? What is the doctrine that we should have?"

And the answers are in this book—the Bible—we simply have to find them. Everything that He felt that man needed to know to live in this time, and any other time in man's history, is right here in the pages of the Bible. It is that easy. It is that simple. But, it is not so simple for some people because they sometimes do not apply the Spirit of God to these questions. Or, they already have an idea of what they think it should be, and

excuse their judgment on these matters.

But, if we do this correctly, we should be able to come up with the godly answer to any of these questions. Remember Mr. Armstrong used to say that if you start with the wrong premise, you are not going to get the right answer. That premise is going to skew everything we do. So we have to start with two premises: (1) The Word of God is the foundation of all knowledge. And (2) What we need to be aiming for is, "How would God decide this matter?"

If we truly and honestly come from these perspectives, we should come up with the right answer. If we are doing this by God's Spirit in prayer, letting Him guide us to the answers to these things.

So, the process is really simple. Once we have this foundation, we identify the problem. Then we find out what the Bible says about it. If it is not specifically mentioned, we take a bit more general approach to it and find the category that it fits in, and work from there. And then we use God's Spirit to extrapolate on the principles that are here. We always start with what is written.

In many places in Scripture, especially Paul and/or Jesus Himself will say, "It is written..." and then they will give you a quote from a previous scripture. Once they quote what is written, they make their comment on it. And often times in Paul's writings, he will say, "this is what we need to do..." He will go through (like in the book of Romans) an entire 11 chapters of doctrinal material as his "what is written" instruction, and then he will give you the next four chapters or so on how we apply this doctrine to our lives.

This is the basic framework—how we work with the spirit of the law to come up with the answers to some of these questions. Hopefully, we come to the point where we get that nugget of doctrine that we need which reflects the mind of God.

The spirit of the law, in short, is judgment based on godly principles. Maybe we should put it as follows: The outcome of the spirit of the law is judgment based on Godly principles. And you know they were doing this in the Old Testament too. That is why you have the law, statutes, and judgments.

There were certain times when Moses himself made judgments based on what God had already revealed to him. And since Moses had the spirit of God, he could go through this process and say, "Well, God has told us this already, and I judge this..."

Oftentimes, he, of course, went to God, and God told him what the judgments should

be. The daughters of Zelophehad are an example of this. ("If there are no sons, the girls should get the land, but they should try their best to marry within their tribe.") That was the judgment. And so, it was based upon what God had said in the inheritance principles. It was not a spiritual thing exactly, but it was an honest attempt to do what God wanted them to do so that they would be in conformity with His will.

And so we have the same sort of thing in our time. Voting is certainly not a spiritual thing to do. The things that are behind it are spiritual principles of why we **do not** do it. It is very much like this thing with the daughters of Zelophehad.

In the New King James, I Corinthians 2:11-16 is titled *Spiritual Wisdom*. However, in the church we would probably call it, "The Spirit in Man." Mr. Armstrong came here quite a bit in trying to help us understand God's spirit versus man's spirit.

I Corinthians 2:11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

That is why the Spirit of God is so necessary to this process. We are not going to know God's mind unless the Spirit of God is actually guiding our own mind. We are talking of the things of God here. We do not know them with just the spirit in man. We have to use the Spirit of God to figure them out.

I Corinthians 2:12-13 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches. . .

We certainly have figured that out over the years—the decisions that are made by the Spirit of God are not the decisions that would have been made by someone out in the world. ("Oh sure you can smoke! There's no problem with that! No harm, no foul."). But, Mr. Armstrong said smoking has to do with love of God, love of neighbor, and love of self. It directly encroaches on the two great commandments. So, man's wisdom would say, "Everybody is free to make that choice." Godly wisdom says, "You shouldn't because you are defiling the temple of God's Spirit."

I Corinthians 2:13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual

things with spiritual.

That is the reason why they came up with this wacky decision in another church that it is OK to smoke, because they were not comparing spiritual things with spiritual. They were comparing physical things with physical! They certainly are not going to come up with godly spiritual wisdom if they do that! They are thinking only by the "Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil," and not by the "Tree of Life."

I Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; . . .

That is what people think about that particular doctrine. "That's silly! Why would a church make that rule?" They just do not understand because they are not thinking spiritually. They are thinking physically! "I can kill myself if I want to!" they are thinking. But God says that if you kill yourself, you are breaking the Sixth Commandment. It is apples and oranges here. Let us pick up right there:

I Corinthians 2:14 . . . nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

They cannot even get to "first base" on these issues because they do not have the tools to deal with them. And so, while I may mock their lack of understanding, I have to understand that they are not all there. They cannot come up with these decisions because they do not have the mind to do it.

I Corinthians 2:15 But he who is spiritual judges all things . . .

If we are not judging these things, maybe we are not as spiritual as we like to think we are. Everything we do should pass through this judgment process of "Is it OK? Is it right? Is it God's will? Are these things within the spirit of God's law to do?"

If we are just going willy-nilly through our lives and not judging these things and not using God's Spirit which He has freely given to us to make these decisions with, then we are missing out on part of the Christian experience. We are missing out on part of the commanded experience to become judges! That is our goal.

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We are to be kings and priests in the Kingdom of God, and both of those functions have judgment as part of them. So we are learning to be judges just like The Judge, Jesus Christ. We are to be His brothers and sisters—His right arms, as it were, in the Kingdom, His government—we had better know how to judge these matters!

This is our playground. This is our experiment, our laboratory, our practice time to do these things, to make these judgments. Even to make some mistakes so that we learn the process more fully, and get it into our thinking, because that is the only thing we are going to take through the grave: Our thinking, our character, the way we do things as Christians.

So, we need to be, as spiritual people, judging constantly. "Is what I am doing at this moment in time Godly?" "Does it conform to the image of Christ?"

I Corinthians 2:15 . . . yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

That seems like a hard one to understand. I am sure that many have picked up on it, meaning something like, "You can't judge me!" But what I think he is doing is still comparing the physical and the spiritual here. And if you are judging spiritually, you should not worry about what other people think or have judged you in regard to spiritual things. You are learning to apply God's Spirit to these things, and no one else should judge you for that, because they probably do not have God's Spirit to judge you by.

I believe it is in Colossians the second chapter where Paul says, "Don't let anybody judge you in how to live, because you are a Christian, and they aren't. They don't know." I may be wrong on the chapter and verses, but I believe it was in regard to the Sabbath, the new moons and that sort of thing. Paul tells the people, "Your neighbors may think you are strange, but they have no right to judge you for these things because you are on an entirely different level. You are judging by God's Spirit. They don't have God's Spirit. So, don't worry about what they think."

I Corinthians 2:16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" [Well, that was the case, and of course we are never going to instruct God.] But we have the mind of Christ.

Do you see what Paul does here? He is quoting out of the Old Testament here, I believe it is Job 15, and Isaiah 40. But, he is saying that this is how it has always been. There was God's mind, and it was so far above anybody else's mind, and it says here, "Who

can know God's mind?" "Who can instruct Him?" But, Paul is pointing out to the Corinthians, who are not using this mind, "Look where God has put us!" He has put us, by giving us His Spirit, into the realm of the Divine as far as having God's mind goes.

This is in response to what he has just said in verse 15. You are rightly judged by no man. And He says, just as God cannot be judged by what He decides, and no one can instruct God on what is spiritual to do, you should not be judged or instructed by them either, because you have the mind of God and they do not.

You see what he has done? He has lifted us up through his rhetoric to a level commensurate with Christ Himself. We are able to think just like Christ.

Now this takes a lot of practice, takes a lot of experience, and takes a lot of mistakes; we will never get it all right in this life. But, that is the goal, is it not? We are supposed to put on the image of Christ. That does not mean our physical appearance. That means our mind—the way we think, the way we judge, the way we then behave, and the way we speak.

So, what Paul is doing here is showing these Corinthians (who he says right in the next couple of verses, are carnal) that we have this awesome place right next to Jesus Christ. We ought to be using what He has given to come up with these right spiritual decisions.

I hope I have explained that well enough. I have spent enough time on it. So, let us just move on from here. Let us follow this process of using the Spirit of God to come up with the spirit of the law on this aspect of voting.

As I have mentioned, the New Testament contains no record of Christians voting. So, we cannot just turn to "I Hezekiah" and read, "Thou shalt not vote!" It is not there. There is nothing in the Bible that tells us not to do it explicitly. So, we must begin more broadly. We have to go to a general category. And that general category is our relationship to human government. That is the broad category that we have to start with.

This relationship with human government is much different under the New Testament, or the New Covenant, than it was under the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was basically **with** a human government. And the people were circumcised into the government. And so the government—the whole nation of Israel—had responsibilities in the governance of the nation, and God appointed prophets, and kings, and that sort of thing. It was one big family.

There was no problem with David becoming king. There was no problem with Daniel's functions within the government of Babylon. These newer things had not been revealed yet. There was an entirely different relationship to human government at this time. But, it rises to a different level when the New Covenant is contemplated.

Let us see how. First, Jesus approached it in Mark 12. Some could use this scenario—this passage—to say that this gives Christians the right to get involved in government. But, I believe that would be twisting the teaching here. This is where they hand Jesus a coin, and ask Him a question.

Mark 12:13-14 Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. [That is a clue that this is a trick and Jesus turns it on them] When they had come, they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

"Is it O.K. to get involved with the Roman government?" is how some people might approach that, but that is not what they really asked. "Are we to give tribute to Caesar?" is what they wanted to know.

Mark 12:15-17 Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it." So they brought it. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at Him.

They could not believe how He twisted it right back onto them, and how He had answered their question with such wisdom. Jesus just simply explained to them the principle of obligation. Very simple. People who live in a particular country are obligated to pay taxes. So, they should pay taxes. Jesus paid taxes. In Matthew 17:27, He told Peter to go put his line in the lake, and get out a fish with a coin in its mouth that would pay the taxes for both Peter and Jesus. He was under obligation because He lived in a Roman province. So, He paid the tax.

This particular tax in Matthew 17 was the Temple tax. At the time He was under obligation, as a Jew, to the taxes of the Temple. So, He paid it. However, what is the

second part of what He said? Render unto God the things that are God's. He says, "Look! Caesar (because of who he is, and because he has made certain laws) has the authority to impose taxes. And God, who is who He is, and is the ruler of all things, and the Sovereign Lord over the entire universe, has even more authority to command us to do things."

And so, whose obligations are we to do first? This is His answer. Sure, give to Caesar what he demands, but first give to God what He demands. Our obligations to God trump all obligations to man. That is what we have to get out of this. You always do what God wants you to do first.

Mark 12:28-30 "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.

Mark 12:32-34 So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

What did Jesus just say here? This is the motto of the Kingdom of God. He said that if you are doing this—rendering first to God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and then serving and loving your neighbor as yourself—then you have got it! You have understood the kernel of what the Kingdom of God is all about.

Which order did they come in? God first, then men second. In a way, this is just a reiteration of what He said to the Pharisees and Herodians that came to trick Him. Sure. Do what you have to do to please Caesar. But, first please God. This is the first principle of why we do not vote. Our first priority is to please God.

John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.

John 15:19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore

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the world hates you.

John 17:16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

What these verses tell us is that we have been specifically called and chosen out of this world. When God calls a person to conversion, the new Christian is summoned to forsake everything—all his former allegiances—and to throw his hand in with Christ. He pulls us out of the world into an entirely new situation. And He repeatedly says this throughout the Scriptures. "You are not of the world. You are different. You are set apart. You are not like you were before your calling. You are in an entirely new group."

It is time that we come to understand this. We may live among these people, but because we have the Spirit of God—because God has specifically chosen each one of us—there is now a gulf between us and them. Remember what we saw there in I Corinthians 2. We do not have the same mind anymore. We have no reason to judge them, because they are in an entirely different camp; and they have no reason to judge us, because they cannot. Their judgment is for Christ, and so is our judgment.

And so we are in these two different camps on opposite poles. Once we are in this alignment, Jesus says that the best thing to do is to give it your all.

Luke 11:23 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

Meaning, "If you aren't doing My work, you are going against My work." That is very simple. He had said this in response to somebody saying that He was casting out demons by Beelzebub. He said a house divided against itself cannot stand. "How could I be doing this work by Beelzebub, and yet preach the Kingdom of God?" They are two opposites! Satan does not want the Kingdom of God.

And so the principle that we get out of this is that we have to be wholehearted in this! If we are not, we are going against God, and against what He is trying to accomplish.

Luke 9:62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Once we have put our hand to the plow [the work], we are to look forward toward the

Kingdom of God, not back to what we used to have.

Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

That is how much we have had to throw our hand in with Christ. So much so, that we hate—or love less—our whole family, and ourselves.

Luke 14:33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

We are not only different, we have left everything behind.

Let us read II Corinthians 6 for a little bit more of this—the same sort of idea.

II Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

Can you see now why Paul said this? We are so different! It is like an ox and an ass trying to pull together. They are totally different animals with totally different inclinations and totally different instincts. They are not going to plow the field well together.

II Corinthians 6:14-15 For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial [the devil]? Or what part has a believer [he gets right down to it] with an unbeliever?

We are in two different camps. He (Satan) is totally entrenched in his camp, and God wants us totally entrenched in our camp. And never the twain shall meet.

II Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

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That is what makes the difference! He is living in us, and not in them. That makes a big difference!

II Corinthians 6:17-18 Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LOORD Almighty."

Let us take a quick look into Psalm 4 just to see that this is not totally just a New Testament concept. David writes:

Psalm 4:3 But know that the LOORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly; The LOORD will hear when I call to Him.

That is another one of the differences! We have a direct connection to God, and they do not, because God lives in us, and He hears our prayers, but not theirs. He does not hear the prayers of sinners, it says. He is deaf to them, unless they are trying to call out in repentance. He knows who He has called.

So, we have been separated, or set apart from all other men by God Himself. We are in a totally different category, and that category is at odds with the other one—with the world. The world, it says in Romans 8, is at enmity with God, and His law. And so, there is no communion there. There is no fellowship. The world's systems—the world's ways, the world's governments, and anything that is of the world—is not ours. Our ways are God's ways. Our government is God's government. Our method, the way that we do everything, is supposed to be based on what God would do. And so, there is no meeting of the minds.

We could go to several scriptures like James 4:4 where James says, "If you have friendship with the world, you are the enemy of God." I John 2:15-17 says, "Love not the world, for the world is passing away, and the lusts thereof." And then, Revelation 18:4 says, "Come out of her, My people, and do not partake of her sins."

I want you to see how Jesus Himself dealt with human government (with Pilate). Let us just pull one scripture of His trial before Pilate. Pilate had just asked Him as He was brought before him, "What have you done?"—to deserve this.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom

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were of this world, My servants [that is you and me] would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

Here is the Son of God, the most powerful Being in the Universe, besides His Father. Here He is facing a puny Roman administrator, the governor of Judea, in Jerusalem. He had just said the night before that if He wanted to, He could call down 12 legions of angels—just like that. But, here He was faced with a human government issue. And this human government wanted to put Him to death. Or, at the very least to scourge Him—to cause Him harm. This is God in the flesh now. No puny you or me.

He could have broken out of there at any time with a word. But, what did He say? He said "I am powerless against you because God hasn't given Me the authority to do anything right now."

He was subject to the government of Rome. Even though they were going to nail Him to a cross, and bleed Him dry, He did not take one action against that government. He did not try to change that government. He did not try to get involved in that government. He said, "Do with Me what you are going to do," because He was following the will of God. And the will of God was that Jesus should die for the sins of mankind, and then rise to His place as our High Priest until the time comes for Him to establish His own government upon the earth.

We—and this is the big point—are no different! We have no right as citizens of the Kingdom of God to get involved with any secular government because it is not our time. Are you not called the Sons of the Kingdom? You are forbidden to take action in or against the governments of this world. Because you are Christ's brothers and sisters, you are under the same restrictions and stipulations that He was. He could do nothing, except submit. That is our entire Christian life before this world. We are supposed to give them a good example. But, when they come against us, we either flee, or submit.

We have not been given the authority or the power to do anything else, just as our Elder Brother could not do anything either. Sobering, but true.

Look what the apostle Paul did here in Philippians 3 (getting back to this idea that we give up everything).

Philippians 3:3-6 For we are the circumcision [that is us as church members—we are the Israel of God now], who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also

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might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

He had the pedigree. He had the education. He had everything that a person—a physical person—would think would give him prestige, position, and authority to get things done in this world.

Philippians 3:7-8 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

This is the attitude. Forsake everything! Dive in wholeheartedly with Christ that we may gain Christ, and that we may be accounted as part of the resurrection to come. Then he says:

Philippians 3:11 If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

That is the spirit that we have to have.

So, if we renounce our citizenship in this country, are we allowed to vote? No. John Walker Lindh renounced his citizenship and joined the Taliban. Do you think he'll ever be allowed to vote here? No. He is not a citizen of this country anymore. He is a citizen of Afghanistan. We are the same. We have renounced our citizenship by being baptized, and by saying that we are Christian. A true Christian must treat his citizenship in the same manner as someone who renounces his citizenship in a nation. Because, a Christian is no longer of this world. He is of the Kingdom of God.

If you flip over a page to Colossians 1:13 it says that the Father has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. We are already legally citizens of the Kingdom of God. In Hebrews 11:13-16, it says that the patriarchs were strangers and pilgrims searching for a country—a homeland—because, they were not citizens of that land in which they sojourned.

That is the way we are. That is why Paul wrote it there. He is trying to tell us, "We're in the same boat." We have to live by faith just the same as Abraham did as a sojourner and a pilgrim in a strange land. And so, just as they were, so are we.

Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

There it is in black and white, plain as day. As Christians, our citizenship is in heaven. And if a person is a Canadian citizen, by law he cannot vote in American elections, can he? No, because he is not a citizen of the country. He cannot vote in any country's election other than Canada's if he is a Canadian citizen. And, that is the way it works with us.

A Christian who is a citizen of heaven should not vote in an election of an earthly nation because he does not belong. However, we are not merely citizens of heaven. We have an office. Did you know you have an office in that government already?

II Corinthians 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ. . .

We already hold the position of diplomat and ambassador for the Kingdom of God in this foreign nation. Now, some would argue that Paul is speaking just of the ministry here, and if you go to Ephesians 6:20 you will see that he does so there as well. But, the principle applies to all Christians. We are all emissaries for Him before the world. You are the "light of the world", aren't you? (Matthew 5:13-16). Philippians 2:15 says, "that you may become blameless, and harmless children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you shine as lights in the world."

I Peter 2:11-12 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Ambassadors represent their government in a foreign land. And, that is what we are doing here. If the Spanish ambassador to the United States were to meddle in the affairs of the American government, even by merely trying to vote, he would violate international law. In the same way, an ambassador of the Kingdom of God cannot

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interfere in the affairs of another sovereign government. It is against the law. It is not right.

Now, I want to give you another reason.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

II Corinthians 10:3-6 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Put simply, the political battles of this nation are not our fight. What is our fight? We are Christian soldiers, are we not? We are battling spiritual evils primarily within ourselves. Our fight is personal and spiritual. It is not political, local, statewide, national, or international. The armaments, the weaponry, and the other defenses that we have been given, are all spiritual. Our struggle, then, is on an entirely different plane. We need not be concerned with who is going to be the next congressman or senator.

When you think about it, compared to what we are doing, and what our battles are, what is happening out there in the political scene is peanuts. It does not matter a wit to God, except as it makes a difference in His plan. But, it really matters to God how well you are overcoming, and growing, and using those spiritual weapons He has given you. That is what matters to Him. He wants you in His Kingdom.

II Timothy 2:4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

If we get involved in somebody else's battles—Satan's—in this world, it is like we have left God's lines and crossed over to the enemy.

God said, "I've enlisted you as soldiers in My army, and I've given you your marching orders, and if you want to please Me, you do what I tell you." And our Commander has

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said, "Overcome, and grow, and be transformed into the image of Christ." That is our job. That is our fight. A soldier does what he is commanded to do. And our job is in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness." And, remember that first and great commandment, which is "Love the Lord your God with everything you've got."

If you are out there fighting political battles, you are not giving God His due.

Please jot down Deuteronomy 30:20. In my last sermon I went to that. The phrase I want out of that is "God is our life." And here in Colossians 3, it says basically the same thing.

Colossians 3:1-4 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

God and Christ are our lives. Everything we are, and everything we do should revolve around Them.

Like I said, if we get involved in the political system of this world, it, by definition, is not something of God. And so we are getting involved in something that does not revolve around Him. We would be going against our calling. We are going against the ground rules. We are going against everything that being a Christian entails. It is not our world.

So, why do we not vote? Here are the seven summary notes in case you did not quite get them going through:

1. Our first obligation is to God.
2. God has called us out of the world. This world's systems and governments are not ours.
3. Like Christ before Pilate, we are subject to the world's governments, but not allowed to act against them, or in them.
4. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are strangers, pilgrims, and sojourners.
5. We are ambassadors of a foreign government.

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6. Our battles are spiritual in nature.
7. Involvement in this world's affairs only distracts us from our true mission, which is preparing ourselves for the Kingdom of God.

Though we may yearn to right the wrongs in this country, to see righteousness prevail in the government, our hope is not in any nation of men. Our hope is in God, and the soon coming establishment of His Kingdom. That is where we are looking. We are looking way beyond these mid-term elections. Our job, as it says in II Peter 3:11-12, is to redouble our efforts to hasten that Day, by plunging into the fight against spiritual evil, and overcoming it in our own lives.

Well, I hope that this has been instructive, and helpful. I wish you all a wonderful Sabbath.