

Navigating the Uncertainty of Politics and Current Events

A Biblical and Constitutional Perspective

By Jim Jess

Part of living a more abundant life is to be able to live a quiet and peaceable life, as the Scripture says in I Timothy 2:2. Living in peace with abundance puts us in a position to be able to readily speak God's Word and minister to others.

Today, far too many people, even believers, are distracted and in fear about events occurring in our nation. To remove the distractions and eliminate the fears, we need to consider Biblical principles as well as some practical keys about governments and politics.

In order to have a society secure and free from civil conflict, government is needed to protect the rights of individuals. As Dr. Victor Paul Wierwille explained, in *The Lifestyle of a Believer*, "There should be some form of strong and stable government, making the practice of morality possible."

In the United States, our Founding Fathers sought to ensure domestic tranquility by establishing a republic, a representative form of government. To oversee our national government, we elect our members of Congress—representatives and senators—and we elect our president. The president appoints judges to serve on the courts, and they are confirmed by members of the Senate. Our Constitution delegates the power to make laws to Congress and the power to execute, or carry out the laws, to the president. Federal judges and Supreme Court justices have been given the authority to rule compliance, or make certain the laws and the Constitution are followed. Courts have the power to settle disputes.

Our government is based on certain Biblical principles, but it is a civil government, an institution of man made up of imperfect men and women. The purpose of this government is to secure our rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as it says in our Declaration of Independence. We, the people, as voters, choose those who will administer this government. Those who we elect are political leaders.

Politicians and the Course of this World

Jesus Christ warned his followers to be wary of the influence of both religious leaders and political leaders.

Mark 8:15

And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

Jesus Christ did not want his disciples to be deceived by the leaven, meaning the wrong doctrines—the erroneous ideas—of both the religious leaders and a specific political

leader—in this case, Herod. Why? Because these leaders were not trustworthy and the ideas they promoted were not consistent with the truths of God's Word.

Most political leaders in the world today follow the course of this world. (Ephesians 2:2-3) They are not focused on spiritual things. While some may desire to do the right thing, many of them are simply serving themselves.

Eliminate the Fear

When elections occur and bring changes in political leadership and public policy, we should not allow fear of political change to trouble us, nor should we allow ourselves to become emotionally distraught. Political change in the United States moves slowly, and fears about how these changes might impact us are often unfounded. That does not mean that we as believers and citizens should not be vigilant, but we should not be shaken by unfounded rumors and fears.

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

Unfounded fears destroy our peace and stir up emotions. Like a snare that captures an animal, fear can immobilize us, when we should be moving ahead for God. When the TV news or social media reports something a politician intends to do that is upsetting to us, we can focus our thinking on the promise that God is our sufficiency. (II Corinthians 3:5; 9:8) We may also need to turn off the TV or stop reading material we find upsetting.

Fear can also affect a group of people, even an entire city or nation. The Book of Jeremiah contains an incredible record about Damascus, a great city of antiquity.

Jeremiah 49:24

Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her: anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail.

This entire city was “seized” by fear. In our nation today, the media keeps up a steady drumbeat about economic hardships, wars, disease and violence; with the added dimension of trying to make anyone who is not in some hardship feel badly. All of these evil reports breed fear and are designed by Satan, the god of this world, to burden the minds of Christian believers and unbelievers alike in order to encourage negative thinking.

The only way to shut down the fear is with the light of God's Word. Light dispels darkness. There is no law that can be passed that will address this problem.

Another line that Dr. Wierwille wrote in *The Lifestyle of a Believer* is worth quoting here: “It is ethically wrong to worry about things beyond our control.”

If you are in a position to discuss your concern about a governmental policy with an elected official in your community, that is one thing. You might offer godly advice to the

public official and ask him or her to address the concern. But if you have no way to affect the outcome of a political decision, the best thing to do is to pray perfectly for the situation and move on with your life. To become emotionally stirred up doesn't help you or anyone else.

Some will make matters worse by sharing their fears on social media, potentially multiplying the impact of fears and negatives in many other lives. As believers, we have a responsibility to shine as lights in this world, not to communicate fear and unbelief. We must control our thinking and confront negative thoughts by putting the Word into our minds.

The Way of the Gentiles or Godly Self-Sacrifice?

Each day, we live among the distractions and pitfalls of this world. So we must be wise and hold fast to the Word we have put in our hearts, and, as I Thessalonians 5:21 says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." This means to examine or test things against our knowledge of the truth of God's Word.

Jesus described how political leaders function when responding to a dispute among the 12 apostles regarding who would have the greatest honor in eternity.

Matthew 20:20-21, 24-28

Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Jesus spoke of how the Gentile princes exercised lordship over their subjects, the people, and that those who were over the princes, exercised power over the princes. It was a hierarchy, with those at the top holding the ultimate power over people's lives. This is the course of this world. This is what politicians do. Men and women seek to wield power over their fellow men, and, if they have a lust for power, no amount of power will ever be enough for them.

In the founding years of the United States, there were great political leaders who lived according to Biblical truths. Our Founders established a system of self-government in which individual liberty is secured and the people are the ultimate authority. Our Constitution and the system it established were a departure from the course of this world. However, in our government today are men and women who desire political

power above all else. Both political parties have produced elected officials with these inclinations, and these folks are usually the ones in charge. They ignore the true spirit of our founding documents and follow the course of this world instead, which is the way of the Gentiles, as Jesus described.

To “spiritualize” certain political leaders and assume that they are serving the one true God because they carry out the policies you prefer can be a great self-deception. People become attached to political candidates or public officials because they see them on TV, meet them in person, hear them give a speech or they find things in common with the individual. But don’t be fooled. Only in rare cases are political leaders the spiritual men and women you would like them to be.

In teaching his apostles, Jesus also described true, godly service as a lifestyle of self-sacrifice. This is not what one generally sees in political leadership. Yet, any political leader who applies this ethical standard in his or her service would be a great servant to the people. Few will make this kind of sacrifice, because most politicians are concerned with advancing themselves. There are examples of selfless service in our nation today, and at times, one can see this service among political leadership, but it is not the norm.

Should We Trust a Governmental Leader to Meet our Need?

We, as believers, should not be deceived into thinking that elected politicians have our best interests at heart. They should, but this is rarely the case. To place our trust in these people, as we would place our trust in God to meet our need, would be wrong. God is our sufficiency, not a man or woman in government and not the government itself.

If we are trusting the government or a governmental leader to meet our need, the adversary has tricked us, and we need to change our thinking.

Psalm 118:8-9

It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

God meets our need, not a government agency or a politician. (Philippians 4:19)

Constitutional Limitations

Our nation’s Founding Fathers did not intend to set up an all-powerful government in Washington, D.C. In fact, the Founders intended most of the functions of our government to be exercised in local communities or at the state level. The national government was set up primarily to secure and defend our borders, conduct foreign policy, administer a common currency, establish a standard system of weights and measures, and establish a postal system. (See Article I, Section 8, of the U.S. Constitution.)

The office of President of the United States has developed in a manner very different than the Founding Fathers envisioned. The Founders did not want an all-powerful

monarch to rule the nation. They had just broken free from the king of England, who had suppressed their freedoms in many ways. They did not want a new king. So they charged the president with the responsibility to “take care that the laws be faithfully executed” and gave him the power to recommend legislation to Congress. They did not give him the power to make laws on his own and impose those laws on the people.

The Founders never intended for the president to be the one to solve every problem of the nation, yet that is the expectation of many citizens today. Because the office of president has become so powerful, political activists flock to support candidates who run for president because they are attracted to the exercise of great power, the desire to make sweeping changes and the power of the president to appoint thousands of people to positions in the government. The presidency in the United States has become an obsession with many people, far beyond what the Founders had ever intended.

Once a president is elected, his or her supporters want the new president to have all the power that might be needed to enact new policies. Yet, the Constitution says that “All legislative power is vested in the Congress of the United States.” (See Article I, Section 1, of the U.S. Constitution.) The idea of a president issuing executive orders to establish policies that should be enacted by Congress is an idea foreign to our Constitution.

What citizens should desire is less power in the office of the president. Citizens should be communicating their policy concerns to their members of the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate. These officials are supposed to be the ones who make the laws, not the president.

Fundamentally, we, the people should not expect the federal government in Washington, D.C., to solve problems that we can solve in our communities. But that is not how most people think today. They immediately assume that Washington and federal tax money should be used to solve every problem. This is due to a lack of understanding of the basic purposes of our local, state and federal governments. Understanding some basic civics lessons will be required if we want government in the United States to function as it was intended.

Our Mission

We each have a responsibility to shine as a light for God, holding forth the Word of life. By controlling our thoughts and keeping our minds renewed with the Word, we can rise above the negatives of the world, including negatives that reach us from the realm of politics and government. With our thoughts well-arranged, we can live joy-filled lives and put ourselves in positions to help others with the Word of life.

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