

Christians and Politics

by Coty Pinckney 9/25/08

What is the relationship of the Christian to politics?

As we move towards November's election, what should role should Christians play?

As a church, we explicitly say in our vision and values statement: "We are not tied to any political party. We value speaking biblical truth to the issues that confront our society, regardless of what parties might be made uncomfortable by the proclamation of that truth." Over the course of the next several weeks I will address issues facing us this election. My goal is to do just that: to bring out the ways that biblical truth sheds light on the issues discussed in this election.

But prior to looking at specific issues, we need to understand our fundamental role. To that end, consider some key biblical texts:

Peter addresses his readers as "elect exiles" (ESV), or "God's elect, strangers in the world" (NIV 1 Peter 1:1). He later refers to them as "sojourners and exiles" (1 Peter 2:11); similarly, the author of Hebrews commends Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah for realizing that they were "strangers and exiles on the earth."

The point: This world is not our home. This country is not our homeland. Instead, we are "fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Ephesians 2:19 NIV). We are united with Christ; He defines who we are. We are truly united with all His people. Our loyalty is to Him above all. Our home, our country, ultimately is in His presence. For all our time in this world, we are ambassadors from a distant country, representing our Sovereign, proclaiming His message.

Our situation, therefore, is similar to the Jewish exiles in Babylon during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The great city of Babylon was not their home. Indeed, the Babylonian army had destroyed Jerusalem, had torn down the temple. But God had a purpose in sending them to Babylon, and He instructed them through the prophet Jeremiah: "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7). So Daniel and his friends served Nebuchadnezzar faithfully, advancing in the civil service, doing all the king asked – up to the point where there was a conflict between loyalty to God and loyalty to the king. At that point, they disobeyed the king.

How do these scriptural principles apply to our role in the election?

We too should "seek the welfare of the city" where God has sent us. We too should participate in ways that will improve the lives of others in this country. Thus we should pray for this country and its leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2); we should inform ourselves of the

issues, analyzing them from a Christian worldview; we should vote wisely. We may choose to campaign; we may choose to run for office.

But our hope is not in any political candidate. Our security does not rest in any political state. We know that "the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will" (Daniel 4:32). We know that nations rise and fall, and that should Jesus delay His return, the United States, like other great world powers, will fall from its preeminent position.

So register to vote, if you have not yet done so. Invest some time in understanding the issues. Vote in such a way that you are seeking the welfare of this country, this state, this city.

But do not despair if your candidate loses. And do not entertain particularly high hopes if your candidate wins. God is sovereign. He is in control. He is our King. We are citizens of His country. So our hope is in Him.