

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Morality, the Government and Christians

Moral statements and positions will, necessarily, impact political issues. This is not because morality is inherently political, but because government has the task of recognizing the difference between good and evil, so moral issues will have to be dealt with (Romans 13:3-4). This means that, contrary to what is so often stated and argued, morality will be legislated by government, and it will be legislated from a worldview that either recognizes the significance of God or not. To say that God needs to be kept out of politics, then, is to default to the secularized view of morality; and secularized morality will then be legislated. Why is it that people default to keeping God out of it instead of keeping the secularized views of reality out of it? And why do some Christians seem to be buying into all of this?

We need to see what has happened here. Many have bought into the notions that (1) God and religion must be kept out of politics, and (2) morality is not something that can be legislated. In fact, both are false. God is never out of politics, and we are fooling ourselves if we think so, given that God rules in the kingdoms of men. Every worldview says something about God. If a worldview says there is no God, then a notion of God is still a part of the position, and actions will be taken that demonstrate that disbelief. Further, every law is a legislation of morality in one form or another; there is no way around it. The question is, will the legislation come from those whose worldview respects God as the foundation or not?

I don't say all of this in order to argue that Christians need to get more political. I'm arguing that Christians need to say more about God and morality in every area of life. We don't check our God at the door when we enter a political arena, and we don't set aside godly morals when we engage the culture. We don't take a moral view of something based on politics, but surely our political views ought to be based on godly morality. The point then is not that we need more political activists. The point is that we need to be more engaged in the moral discussions of our culture and take a stand for what is right, regardless of political fallout. In other words, it's not about being political; it's about standing for what's right in the middle of a crooked and perverse generation.

Even more, we need to hold up the gospel itself to the world. The answer to our problems is not to vote in or out this or that politician. No government in history has been a bastion of godliness, and I don't expect that to change. The answer is always where it has been: in Christ. The problems of this world won't be fixed by human government, but by the gospel. "The kingdoms of earth pass away one by one, but the kingdom of heaven remains."

So Christians should be concerned with (1) holding out the gospel to a lost world, and (2) standing up for Christ and His morality. It's not politics. It's just what's right.

- Doy Moyer

To Whose Tune Do You Harken?

In the Brothers Grimm tale The Pied Piper of Hamelin, a small German town overrun with rats calls upon the services of "a tall thin man dressed in brightly colored clothes, with a long feather in his hat, waving a gold pipe at them." The townspeople offer to pay the piper to remove all of the rats from their town.

The next morning the piper plays an irresistible tune on his pipe, leading the rats down to the river where they are drowned and swept away. The moral of the Brothers Grimm story is not realized in the Piper's feat, but in the broken promise of the townspeople who fail to make their payment to the piper. At dawn he teaches them a painful lesson when he leads all of their children away and into a mountain never to be seen again.

Though the moral of keeping your promises is a needed one (James 5:12), one can't help but reflect on the strange tune the piper played that irresistibly led the rats and children out of the town.

Does not Satan have a way of playing just the right irresistible tune to lead us to our destruction?

Sometimes the song Satan plays hits the chords of the "various lusts" that dwell in our hearts (2 Timothy 3:6). Some abandon the Lord's ways, however clearly expressed, for things as simple as preference of music type or things as destructive as adultery and fornication. Satan knows the song that resonates in your heart and he will not fail to play it.

Likewise, Peter speaks of those who "fall from their own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked" (2 Peter 3:17). When we become discontent with the truth, Satan plays the songs of error that will lead us away. As Satan has contrived every flavor of error under the sun for our partaking, he has exactly the right tune to lead each of us away should the love of the truth not resonate on our heart (2 Timothy 2:9-12).

The redeemed sing a new song (Revelation 14:3). This song resonates so strongly in their hearts that none will ever separate them from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39).

- Jonathan Perz

All Nations (Gentiles) were Always in God's Plan!

As the eternal plan of God unfolded for bringing a Savior into the world, a special nation was called forth to serve and belong to Him, through whom His Messiah would come with His good news concerning the kingdom of God and salvation for all nations. Thousands of years ago, Abraham was called by God to leave his home and travel to a country that his descendants would come to possess. He was given a divine promise: "And I will make you a great nation, And I will

bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Genesis 12:2-3). The certain promise was repeated, "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." (Genesis 22:18).

It was clear that the faithful were convinced by God's reliable voice that His special people would keep hope alive for the fulfillment of the promise of a kingdom which would never be destroyed and a King who would reign forever. But not only His chosen nation would be blessed, but the blessings would be open to ALL nations. Abraham's son Isaac also received this all-inclusive promise: "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;" (Genesis 26:4).

Hundreds of years later, David also reminded the people of these facts: "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations will worship before You." (Psalms 22:27). "All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name." (Psalms 86:9). "Praise the LORD, all nations; Laud Him, all peoples! For His lovingkindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD is everlasting. Praise the LORD!" (Psalms 117:1-2).

The prophet Isaiah also echoed these things: "Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it." (Isaiah 2:2; cf. 11:10). "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations." (Isaiah 42:1). "I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison." (Isaiah 42:6-7). To Israel, God said, "I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6b).

The Lord's prophet Daniel continued concerning the Messiah, speaking as if the promise was already fulfilled: "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:14).

In the New Testament, when the kingdom of God was opened and the gospel of Christ was preached (beginning at Jerusalem, Acts 2), it was offered first to the nation of Israel, and then unto the Gentiles, or all other nations (Acts 13:46). Paul writing to the Romans showed that the gospel was the power of God for all who believe, the Jew and the Gentile (Romans 1:16; see 15:9-16). Following divine visions and commands, Peter came to the realization: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him." (Acts 10:34-35). In Acts 28:28, Paul assured the

descendants of Abraham that God's plan of salvation is open to all people: "Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen."

The Jews of those days who were converted to Christ not only gave thanks to God for their salvation, but also for the salvation of the Gentiles (without forcing them to keep the Law of Moses, Acts 11:18). This was a marked change from the extreme aversion and hatred that had developed by New Testament times (cf. John 18:28; Acts 10:28).

Paul wrote about God's plan to admit Gentiles into His kingdom through faith in Christ in Romans 9-11, where an olive tree and grafting is used as illustration. There was no place for Gentile boasting, only rejoicing in salvation. Both Jew and Gentile were to realize that the blessings of the gospel belong to all who will believe. Each must be diligent to keep the faith, avoiding drifting away. All must be diligent in preaching the gospel to all people.

Are we not rejoicing in gladness for such wonderful blessings?

- Gary Smalley

* "The mirror of the Word is painfully clear!"

* "No atheist can injure the Bible's influence as thoroughly as a Christian who disregards it in his daily life!"

* "There is no place to hide sin without the conscience looking in!"

* "Always remember you are unique just like everyone else!"

* "Consider the postage stamp. Its usefulness lies in the ability to stick to one thing until completed!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)