

The Timeless Voice: Set apart in a partisan world

Commentary by Greg Baker

Last week I got together with a friend who loves the Lord but sits on the other side of the political aisle from me. To have such a friend has been an answer to prayer, and the goal of our relationship is to spur one another on in Christ.

The relationship started with an effort to find common ground and places we can work together. Our friendship has accomplished both of these things, and so much more. As I have combed through the Scriptures with this brother in the Lord and heard his thoughts on different issues, I have been challenged to search even deeper through the Scriptures to find God's answers and not my own. At times God's answers are not always the most convenient, but they are the truth.

This relationship, along with others like it, has also changed the way I view politics. It has brought to light this verse: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). It has taught me that we as Christians must not build our worldview of government on theories and worldly philosophies. Rather than conforming to labels like "conservatism" or "liberalism," or any other human ideology, we must allow the Scriptures to determine and define our worldview.

"Your Word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). The Word of God is the only universal truth in this world. And it is not conservative or liberal. It is just the Truth. The truth is often inconvenient and constantly challenges our form of thinking. If you are reading the Bible to reinforce the way you are thinking, you are not reading it with the right heart. As believers we should study the

Scriptures to better come to the knowledge of who God is, who we are, and what He says is true. We must conform to His way of thinking. He is the source of life (John 6:47-48), which means He and His Word lead to life. "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Anything opposed to His words leads to death.

The Scriptures will constantly challenge our way of thinking and renew our minds, changing us throughout our lives (Romans 12:2; Philippians 1:6). The Word of God is sanctifying us, and making us more and more like Christ. Yet we must be willing to let the Word of God change our minds, even when verses challenge our deeply held beliefs. Scriptures will not always line up with our politics. When that happens, we will be forced to ask, "Who do we trust, our political ideology or God?"

Republican, Democrat, conservative, and liberal – all of these things are temporary and worldly philosophies. They are perishing, as this world is perishing (1 John 2:17). Presidents come and presidents go, majorities come and majorities go, but the Word of the Lord remains forever. We must never forget this amazing universal truth. God's Word was in existence well before this nation was created, and it will be in existence long after this nation passes. "The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the Word of the Lord remains forever" (Isaiah 40:8).

I envision a day when brothers and sisters in the Lord from all different political beliefs sit down together and study the Word of God. Yet what will bring us together is not a simple commitment to bipartisanship; we must work together in the Lord, to seek a common truth, His Word. "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose" (Philippians 2:2). We must go beyond seeking common ground. We must find out what is actually true. Conservative and liberal leaning Christians

must work together to find where God stands on an issue and conform to that. That is where unity is found. That is our "same mind," the universal truth of God's Word. We must not be governed by conservatism or liberalism, but by the Bible.

Brothers and sisters, in a world that is getting more and more political, where you can't even watch a football game without being confronted with divisive politics, we have an incredible opportunity to be a light. God wants us to look different. He wants us to stand out. And what makes us stand out is not how brightly we shine red or blue, but rather our refusal to conform to the colors of the world.

I encourage you, my brothers and sisters, stand out from the world in the arena of civics. Don't identify with the world's factions. Build your ideology on the truths in the Scriptures, and work to conform every thought and belief to the Word of God, including your political beliefs. If you do this, you will not only be unique, but you will be a true light in a dark and perishing world (1 John 2:17).

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