



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT?



By Dr. Rick Scarborough

Over the past 20 years I have become known as a “preacher who is involved in politics,” as if that were a negative. The funny thing is that for the first 20 years of my public ministry I was known as an evangelist. In fact, before accepting a pastorate, I was a full-time itinerant Southern Baptist evangelist, conducting over 500 crusades across the country and around the world, and was twice elected by my peers as the President of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists.

So how is it that I became so involved in politics? And more importantly, should a preacher of the gospel, or any believer, be involved in politics? My answer to the second question is a resounding “YES!” and my goal is to convince every pastor and believer that our nation’s survival depends on Christians getting politically involved.

To answer the first question, I became involved in politics when as a pastor I was forced to confront an ungodly high school assembly at our local high school. Once I recognized that evil had arrived at our doorstep I took steps to respond, and before long, members of our church held majorities on the school board and the city council. In

time, three went on to serve in the Texas Legislature, and one, Randy Weber, is now a U.S. Congressman.

To explain my answer to the second question, allow me to provide a theological foundation for what I believe. Throughout the Scripture, there are numerous examples of God’s men engaging political leaders—from Moses and Daniel in the Old Testament to Peter and John in the New. In fact, one would be hard-pressed to find a single character of note in the Scripture who did not interact or confront appointed leaders in the course of conducting their ministries.

One of most instructive encounters is recounted in the book of Acts. Paul and Silas embark on Paul’s second missionary journey to encourage the new believers who embraced Christ during his first journey. But in the middle of the night, Paul is awakened from his slumber to see a vision of a Macedonian man who pleads with Paul to bring his message of hope to the region of Macedonia.

It is clear that Paul is not politically driven, as his only passion is to please Christ and to share the gospel. That must always be the primary focus of

a pastor or believer. The impact of Paul’s obedience is immediate: After his arrival in Philippi (the chief city of Macedonia), Lydia, a prosperous and influential citizen, is saved. She offers her home as Paul’s headquarters and from there he begins to preach to anyone who will listen.

A young woman is saved and delivered from a demonic spirit, which apparently empowered her to tell fortunes. What is clearly the best thing to ever happen to her, is the worst thing that could happen to the men who profit from her, and they are furious. When told of how Paul’s preaching has thus affected her, these powerful men summon the authorities and accuse Paul and Silas of sedition and heresy, and have them beaten.

Just as Paul is not politically driven, here we see he is not politically connected, but rather powerless before the civil magistrates. He and Silas are thrown into prison and chained, where from man’s perspective, their hope of seeing God work in Philippi is over.

We now discover Paul and Silas are not politically dependent. They are dependent on God and turn to Him. Soon they are praying and singing praises to their Lord, whom they know is more than able to work good out of this tragedy.

God comes to their aid and sends a mighty earthquake that shakes the town, causing fear to grip the city. God even releases their chains and opens every jail cell! The jailor is so fearful for his life, believing the prisoners he was guarding have escaped, that he is prepared to take his own life until Paul shouts to the jailor, “Fear not, we are all here!” The jailor and his whole household then come to faith in Christ.

God’s rescue also causes a change of heart among the officials, who decide that Paul and Silas are bad for the city, and therefore send word that they should be released immediately. But here we find that Paul and Silas are not politically ignorant. Instead of grabbing their things and heading home, Paul informs the authorities that he is a

Roman citizen, and as such, he has rights which they have denied. He redresses his grievances, and, rather than leaving, returns to the city and strengthens the new believers.

The church in Philippi were ardent supporters of Paul’s ministry until his death, and arguably became one of the strongest churches in the New Testament. And all because Paul was “politically active”—speaking the truth in love as God directed.

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We too must realize and cherish that as American Christians, we have dual citizenship just as Paul had. His was a heavenly citizenship and a Roman citizenship, and he used his Roman citizenship with skill and reason to advance the gospel. We are citizens of heaven and citizens of the freest nation the world has ever known, but we are in danger of losing this freedom because most Christians don’t even exercise their most basic right to vote. Among the minority who do, seldom do they take the time to get educated on the issues and vote Biblically.

We are in danger of losing our freedoms because the church so often fails to show up or hasn’t known how to unite as one powerful voice to our culture. In one generation, we have witnessed degradation unmatched by previous generations, and it will not stop until Christians return to the public arena—running for office, voting for righteous candidates, and speaking up for our values on opinion pages and in courts of law. Like Paul, we have rights, but we will lose them if we don’t stand up, speak up, and refuse to give up!

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Dr. Rick Scarborough is the founder and former president of Vision America, a non-profit organization focused on informing and mobilizing pastors and their congregations to be “salt and light” in the political arena. He served as a pastor for 27 years. Dr. Scarborough continues to serve and speak to pastors across the country with Vision America alongside its new president, John Graves. John founded Acts 20:28 Pastors to equip, engage, and empower pastors to lead God’s church and impact the culture through political involvement.

For more information about Acts 20:28 Pastors, email info@2028pastors.com or visit www.2028pastors.com.