

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 64, Number 7

Editor ~ Wade Stanley

Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

July, 2022

A Christian's Political Impact

Joshua Riggins

For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (1 Peter 2:15).

Peter makes the case that our submitting to government “for the Lord’s sake” by doing good allows us to impact the political narrative (1 Peter 2:13). The most effective and godly way you can influence the rulers of our nation is by doing them good.

We live in a world which increasingly resorts to protest, complaint, and polarization. It seems many brethren have joined in these complaints, buying into the world’s reactionary flood. We believe that complaining about the election, disparaging governmental officials for decisions made, and openly trumpeting vile euphemisms such as “let’s go Brandon” will somehow improve the country to which we belong. None of this is “doing good,” and instead of putting to silence ignorant men, it stokes the fires of political and civil unrest. “Does the spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?” (James 3:11).

God calls us to be different. We are called to be holy as He is (1 Peter 1:16), knowing that the precious blood of our Savior redeemed us from our “aimless conduct” (1 Peter 1:18-19). Our lives have a purpose (1 Peter 2:9-10), hope (1 Peter 1:3), and freedom (1 Peter 2:16). And with that purpose, hope, and freedom, God calls us to respond to earthly governments differently than the way the world responds. In 1 Peter 2, God calls us to respond in two ways: we are to submit to every ordinance (verse 13) and honor the king (verse 17). To submit is to lower ourselves to the will of another. Every year when we file our taxes, we show submission to the ordinances of the government. To honor carries with it the idea of “value.” Peter tells us to affix a value to the “king.” God allowed our lives to be more stable and better lived because we have the rule of law and the rulers to enforce those laws. We praise Him for this by

honoring the king.

What if the official rules are against my principles? Do I need to honor the king even then? Peter addresses this question three times in 1 Peter 2:13-17. In verse 13, we are to submit for the Lord’s sake. We lower our will to the will of the governor, for the Lord’s sake. It isn’t because we admire the governor or especially like his or her politics. We submit because we love God! In verse 15, Peter remarks that it is God’s will. God has a purpose for our submission. He desires the world to come to know Him through the way we conduct ourselves. Others who might foolishly speak against the government are put to silence through our good. For instance, what might happen if

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we took this period of inflationary pressure to pay for gasoline in the car next to us at the station, remarking to them how we want them to know the blessings of God? Do we not suppose the Lord will be much more glorified than when we join in the mass complaining? In verse 16, Peter completes his point by reminding us that we are bondservants of God. Even if we would rather rail against the leaders, Peter reminds us of our place. We belong to God, and God has commanded we honor the king. He leaves no room for us to dishonor the king.

It cannot be denied that sentiments and laws coming from our earthly government do not coincide with biblical morality. This is nothing new. Daniel faced a law in Daniel 6:7 that was supposed to prevent him from praying to God. Daniel never protests the law, and although he disobeys (verse 10), his

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behavior is a quiet resolve to serve God. When the king was forced by law to cast Daniel into punishment (**verse 16**), Daniel's behavior up to this point made the king regret his law. And when Darius had the opportunity to return Daniel from the lion's den, he hurried as soon as he could (**verse 19**). Notice Daniel's first words to Darius, the one who just threw him into the pit, "O king, live forever!" (**verse 21**). God certainly saved Daniel (**verse 22**), but it was Daniel's behavior toward him that helped Darius see God. Darius writes marvelous words about God starting in **verses 26-27**. By serving God, Daniel's good was able to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. By doing good to his king, Daniel was able to help Darius, and likely countless others, see the goodness of the one true God.

Have we considered whether our political outrage may be negatively impacting our ability to help others know the Lord? When we get angry and speak ill of our government, who do we believe, seeing our behavior, thinks, "if only I had a God like his, then I too would see the world the way he does?" Are we perpetuating the darkness around us, or are we the light?

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

~ 401 Douglas Dr, Bloomfield, IN 47424
jgriggins@gmail.com

What's in Your Diet?

Ben Fry

Many people are very aware of what they put into their bodies. We have diets of all kinds for all people. You can have a paleo diet, a Mediterranean diet, Atkins, or diabetic. In some cases, these diets are for health reasons, and sometimes they are about how we feel about ourselves.

Throughout the years, there have been many programs and much concern by the government about what we eat and how

we eat it. Concerns about butter led to the production of margarine. Our crops can be genetically engineered for longevity or productivity. Throughout the years, there have been changes to how we look and think about nutrition.

Do we put as much concern and thought into what we put into our minds? Paul tells Timothy, "For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (**1 Timothy 4:8**). It is good to be healthy and to take care of these bodies that the Lord has given to us, but we also need to make sure that we are taking care of our minds and our spirits. We especially need to be training them in righteousness and godliness.

More than ever, we are surrounded by a never-ending stream of information, opinions, and propaganda. What we watch, listen to, and read will affect our minds and spirits. Some will make us better; others will make us worse. Sometimes they are obvious; many times, they are not. For example, **Proverbs 9** depicts Folly as a woman. The words used to describe her are "loud," "seductive," and "know-nothing." But she gladly calls out to all who pass by, trying to get them to turn in at her door. She seeks the simple and those who lack sense. And she is depicted as using very similar words and phrases as the lady Wisdom.

This is the path of much of our modern media. This includes many popular places where people consume their entertainment, like the television, books, radio, and various social media platforms. Even those that claim to be Christian can be problematic. Paul warned Timothy about those who departed from the faith having their conscience seared with a hot iron (**1 Timothy 4:2**). The writer of the book of Hebrews chastised the people he was writing to because "though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God" (**Hebrews 5:12**). Not all Christians have a solid grasp of the basics, let alone the advanced concepts in God's word. Not all who claim to be Christian are Christian.

This is why I tend to be very hesitant to recommend any kind of media to anyone, even though I keep a list for myself. I may agree with much of what people have to say, or I may appreciate their perspective, but I want to be careful not to cause anyone to stumble because of something I suggested

they look at. I do not want to lead anyone astray!

We need to turn away from folly and instead turn to wisdom. Like Folly, Wisdom also cries out, *"Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!"* (**Proverbs 9:4**). But she does not lead us down a path that leads to death. Instead, she reminds us that *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"* (**Proverbs 9:10**).

We must begin our spiritual diet with the Lord and learn who he is and what he has done for us. We must be like the man of Psalm 1 whose *"delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night"* (**verse 2**). If we start our diet here in the pure milk of scripture, then we can grow into one who can eat meat and know the mysteries of the Lord. The scriptures of the Lord also provide us with a tool to measure the many other types of media that are available. They let us test to see what is pure, noble, trustworthy, and in line with the word of God.

Like any diet, we may have to cut out the things that are not good for us. The junk food may be fine to eat occasionally, but we can't eat too much, or we'll have a stomach ache. Other things may be poisonous and should be avoided at all costs. Spiritually this may mean that some things are okay to indulge in sometimes but should not be our whole diet. Other things should be completely avoided because they will taint us and cause us to stumble. Remember how Jesus told his disciples that it would be better to lose a part of their body if it caused them to sin than to go to the place of darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. We need to make sure that we are cutting folly and foolishness out of our minds and our lives.

This is not going to be an easy process. Cutting off a part of who we are, even if it is bad for us, will never be easy. But we are at war. We see this idea when Paul reminds the Corinthian church that we are at war with the flesh. A part of that war is *"bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"* (**2 Corinthians 10:5**). The Lord expects us to control our minds and thoughts in accordance with his will. We are his people, and he is our God and savior! We need to make sure that what we do and what we participate in brings glory to the great I Am.

Our stomachs process food, and then the bad is filtered out and leaves our bodies. Not so our minds. Once something has

entered our mind, it is there forever. We need to work hard now so that later our minds are already set in the right place. Remember that this is a weightier matter than what we eat! That is part of the point that Paul was trying to make to Timothy when he compared physical exercise to godliness.

Like an appropriate diet, becoming godly will require time, effort, and self-control. It will be done best with the help and the support of other like-minded people. It is only possible with the help of the Holy Spirit. It isn't something that will happen overnight, but it is something that we need to get started as soon as possible.

~ 2324 Delbert St. Bakersfield, CA 93312
benifry@yahoo.com

Glory to God!

The brethren in **Kirkville, MO** joined the heavenly chorus in praise when **Ava Salter** put on Christ in the waters of baptism on May 15.

The brethren who meet on **South Fairfax, Bakersfield, CA** rejoiced when **Pamela "Pami" Harrison** was baptized into Christ for her salvation on June 2.

Blessed Are the Dead

Sammy Stanley, 97, of Raytown, MO passed away Friday, April 22. Brother Sammy was born May 29, 1924, in Carroll County, MO to **Oscar** and **Mattie (Wiley) Stanley**. He graduated from Carrollton High School and later from Chillicothe College. He then joined the Army Air Corp and proudly served during World War 2 in the Pacific Theatre. He was highly decorated and served in the defensive area of the Air Corp and had flown thirty-six combat missions bombing Japanese airfields. After his military service, he worked in the accounting department at Lake City Ammunition Plant for over thirty-four years. He enjoyed gardening and had a green

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thumb. He was an avid KC Royals fan and he loved to sing. Brother Sammy was a member of the church in **Independence, MO** and led the church in all aspects of the worship service. He is survived by his wife of over 60 years, **Mary (Chastain) Stanley** of the home and a son, **Barton (Susan) Stanley**. He was preceded in death by his parents, five sisters and two brothers.

Special Meetings

The brethren in **Excelsior Springs, MO** look forward to hosting the **Summer Meeting July 24-29**. Using your phone or tablet camera, please scan the QR code to the left to RSVP and to see a full schedule of events. The brethren have planned a wonderful event and your editor is certain that all who attend will be encouraged and edified by the teaching and fellowship.



Scan the QR code with your camera app to visit our website to RSVP and view a full schedule of classes, services, and activities.

The **Old Lamine Church of Christ** in rural **Blackwater, MO** plans its annual one-day **Family VBS** for **July 16**. This year's theme is "How are We Labelled?"

Please make plans to join the **White Oak Church of Christ** in rural **Ethel, MO** for its annual one day meeting on **August 28**.

The churches in **Unionville, MO, Martinstown, MO, and Memphis, MO** have planned a **Fall Campout** for **September 30-October 2** at Unionville City Park and the Putnam County Fairgrounds. The weekend begins with a fellowship event on Friday, September 30 at 7 p.m. **Joshua Riggins** will lead a

study of "Christian Hospitality" the morning of October 1. **Michael Eldridge** will lead a gospel singing Saturday evening. The Sunday morning worship service will include speakers **John Lee** and **Louis Garbi** who will speak on "Do Not Worry" and "Standing on the Rock." A flyer with more information will be forthcoming. Please make plans to join the churches of Northern Missouri in this new venture.

2022 Meetings

July 4-8.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO
July 16.....Old Lamine Family VBS, rural Blackwater, MO
July 24-29.....Summer Meeting, Excelsior Springs, MO
August 28.....White Oak, rural Ethel, MO
September 3-4.....Pleasant Hill, IA
Sept 30-Oct 2.....North MO Fall Campout, Unionville, MO
October 15-16.....Nixa, MO

The Gospel Message

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Wade Stanley, 18078 State Highway 149, Unionville, MO 63565 wadestanley@gmail.com

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THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (USPS:576-040) (ISSN:1054-7991) is published monthly for \$7 per year by **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057. Periodicals Postage Paid at Independence, MO. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057