

A DIFFERENT KIND OF LIFE

The Purity of a Nation

TEXT: Mt. 5:8

INTRODUCTION: I can tell by the way you are looking at me that you are wondering about my attire today. No doubt, many of you have already begun to try to guess the reason for it.

It could be because my Lord has said,

Mt. 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

Yet the nation that I love continues the legalized murder of unborn children at a pace such that one in every five babies conceived in America dies while still in the womb of his or her mother.

Is it not sufficient reason to wear black that I am a citizen of a nation that fought against the perpetrators of the holocaust which slew nearly 11 million people, yet we ourselves have slain over 57 million people since 1973, and each of them a tiny, helpless child.

Why do I wear a black robe today?

Could it be because the Son of God declared,

Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

Yet I live in the day of which Isaiah prophesied where people call good evil and evil good. I live in the day in which the homosexuality which God labeled abomination is a cause of celebration and afforded special protected status by our government. Should I not mourn and testify of my sorrow by the clothing I wear?

Or maybe I am in this most unusual dress for a Baptist preacher because the soon coming King of the Universe, Who will sit as judge over the whole earth, and who said,

Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

This King sees the people of this land, of whom I am a part, who think they are a law unto themselves to decree as right or wrong whatsoever they may think and who as an example of their unrighteous judgment are attempting to redefine marriage contrary to the proclamations of their Creator Who gave us this holy institution.

Is that not sufficient reason for us all to wear black robes?

Oh, God, may the moral and spiritual depravity of the land we call home cause each of us to become poor in spirit and humble ourselves before you.

May we mourn over our own sin individually but also over the collective sins of our nation for which we at least are partially culpable, for we have utterly failed to do all that was in our power to halt this evil.

May the sad state of our nation motivate us to be done with self seeking and become kingdom seeking men and women living in the meekness of our Savior Whose zeal for God the Father burned like coal fanned by a strong wind.

God, may the starved souls of the citizens of our country create in us a hunger and thirst for righteousness,

And may we seek Your mercy through the cross, and having found mercy there, bring others with us who need mercy. Oh God, how America needs your mercy.

And God, dare we even ask for you to grant us purity of heart? Would we even recognize it when we see it? Or would we destroy it like Israel stoned the prophets who proclaimed righteousness and pointed the people to the coming Christ?

Oh Father, we Americans have sunk so deep into the sea of wickedness, that we know that only by Your long arm and strong hand could our nation ever be delivered. And only because we know from Your Word, that You are a God of boundless grace, do we dare to even ask for your help. But you are such a God, One Who does not desire that any should perish, and so in the name of Jesus Who bore our sins, even these great sins, upon the cross, we come on behalf of our nation asking that as a people we may learn and practice what you taught your followers centuries ago,

Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. Amen.

Although I have told you several reasons for which I might be wearing a black robe today, and each of them is indeed sufficient, none of them or all of them are the reason I am dressed this way.

For rather than this robe being primarily an outward sign of mourning, I wear this robe to honor men who led our fellow Americans, to give birth to the United States of America as a nation that understood, that respected, that valued, that loved the words of the Lord Jesus when He said,

Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

These men wore black robes like this robe. They were called “The Black Robed Regiment,” and they were pastors in the churches of America preceding the Revolutionary war.

“According to David Barton the British blamed the Black Robed Regiment for the American fight for independence, and modern-day historians agree. Alice M. Baldwin wrote: “There is not a right asserted in the Declaration of Independence which had not been discussed by the New England clergy before 1763.” Barton claims that the rights listed in the Declaration came from sermons by the clergy in the previous two decades. The British, modern historians and our Founding Fathers all credited the clergy with inspiring and supporting the fight for independence.”
(from Causeofliberty.blogspot.com)

Folks, **America needs** another revolution. It needs **a spiritual revolution!** This morning I ask a single question.

I. **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF EACH OF US AS BELIEVERS IN THE SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION OUR NATION NEEDS?**

Through the years, people have offered various answers to this question.

Dr. Wayne Grudem has accurately summarized these responses in his book *Politics – According to the Bible*. I seldom quote others when I am preaching and even less often cite their credentials. But I want you to understand that Wayne Grudem knows what he’s talking about when he tells us the history of thought surrounding this question. Dr. Grudem has degrees from Harvard, Westminster, and Cambridge. He is the General Editor of the ESV Study Bible, one of the most accurate English translations of the Scriptures available today.

So, back to our question: **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF EACH OF US AS BELIEVERS IN THE SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION OUR NATION NEEDS?**

A. Government Should Compel Religion

I doubt that any of us would support this view, but historically there were a lot who did. This was the English view that led the Pilgrims to flee their homeland and come to the New World where they could have religious freedom.

Hardly any Christian group today holds this view, but there are other religions that do. For instance, Saudi Arabia compels its citizens to follow Islam, and very severe penalties are invoked on any who do not comply.

But this view is not Biblical, for Jesus invited people to come to Him. He did not seek the force of government to compel them.

B. Government Should Exclude Religion

This is the view today promoted by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and sadly is being increasingly followed by our courts. This is the view that removes displays of the Ten Commandments and references to Christ in prayers at public meetings or Bible verses being quoted in Valedictory addresses.

This view is not only wrong Biblically, for the Scripture says, **Psalm 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,** This view is also wrong constitutionally in America. This could not have been what our Founding Fathers intended because they themselves, In the Declaration of Independence, called on Nature's God for divine sanction of their action and referred to the unalienable rights as endowed by the Creator.

It certainly is not a position that we would want to be guilty of holding.

C. All Government Is Evil and Demonic

I recognize that we are sometimes tempted to sympathize with this position, as were early believers and those today who live under severe persecution. But this position also is not the Biblical one. Some governments are evil, and all human governments are capable of evil and often succumb to it. Nevertheless, we must remember the truth of

Daniel 4:17 ... the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will ...

Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

While rulers and governments can be and often are wicked in various degrees, they do not have to be, and ultimately they are all subject to our Sovereign God. Therefore, this position also is not the correct one.

D. Do Evangelism, Not Politics

Now you may think that this is my position, but it is not. While the proclamation of the gospel, call it evangelism, discipleship, missions, is the chief responsibility given to us as believers by our Lord, it is not all that He or His Word commands us to do.

While the Scripture makes it clear that we cannot be saved by our good works
Ephesians 2:8–10 ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of God,* ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

It makes it equally clear that we who are saved are to do good works.
¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

One of the things that Jesus specifically told us to do is
Luke 20:25 ... “Render ... to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

Because we live in a democratic republic, one of the things we owe to our government is our participation and influence. Therefore, it is not a Biblical position to say that we believers should do evangelism exclusively and stay out of things political.

Some, however, go to the opposite extreme.

E. Do Politics, Not Evangelism

This was the philosophy that fueled the Social Gospel Movement of previous generations. It is not much of a temptation to us because we saw the failure of such a system. However, let us remember, that ultimately we cannot achieve victory over sin, evil, and the devil through government. This is a spiritual battle and can only be won through Christ, and His means of achieving victory is through the gospel.

So while we are not to forget our responsibilities as citizens as we proclaim the gospel, we are not to spend all of our energies in trying to make government right and not invest the largest portion of our time, and energy, and finance in that which will ultimately change the hearts and eternal destiny of people all over the world and that is through the sharing of the gospel.

So, five views historically men have held concerning the relationship of government and Christians, and each of them is wrong according to the Scriptures. So, what is right? What says the Lord.

God says

F. The Christian Should Exercise Influence on Government

This is what Daniel did with Nebuchadnezzar
Daniel 4:27 Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by *being righteous*, and your iniquities by showing mercy to *the poor*. ...

This is what the prophets did

Amos 1:11 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its *punishment*, Because he pursued his brother with the sword, And cast off all pity; ...

This is what John the Baptist did with Herod

Luke 3:19 But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him ... for all the evils which Herod had done,

This is what Paul did before Felix

Acts 24:25 Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid ...

This is what our Christian forefathers and mothers did throughout the years of human history. Historian Alvin Schmidt says that **Christian influence on government** was primarily responsible for

- **outlawing infanticide, child abandonment and abortion in the Roman Empire in AD 374**
- **granting property rights and other protections to women**
- **the banning of polygamy**
- **prohibiting the burning alive of widows in India**
- **outlawing the crippling practice of binding young girls' feet in China**
- and while there were plenty of sad and sinful exceptions among God's people, it still was primarily because of Christian influence that **slavery was abolished in the Roman Empire, in England, and in America.**
- And it was also primarily because of Christian influence among both blacks and whites that the **civil rights of all people regardless of race were established as the law of our land.**

So, my dear Christian brother and sister, what shall we do here in 2014? Shall we just bemoan the sad condition of our country or shall we obey the Scriptures and act. Sadly, most Christians just moan. Less than 25% of most church going Christians vote in a general election such as we are about to have on November 4. No wonder we are in the mess we are in.

Dear fellow believer, please do not let that be true of us. Let us show our love for God and our love for country and commit ourselves to cast our votes in a couple of weeks. That would be literally the least we can do of what we ought to do as Christian citizens of a democratic republic.

And let us pray, often, fervently, diligently for the purity of our nation. Jesus cares.

Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.