

HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD VOTE

1 Timothy 2:1-2

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. July 4, 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the USA. It's our 250th birthday since the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. It's our semiquincentennial. Before then, we were thirteen English colonies under the rule of King George III and the British Parliament. The colonies came to believe that they were being mistreated by Britain, so they declared their independence and formed a new nation. The USA is not a perfect nation, but over the past 250 years it has grown to become the strongest, freest, and most prosperous nation in the history of the world.
2. To celebrate our nation's semiquincentennial, I want to preach about how Christians should vote. How should Christians vote so that the USA remains the strongest, freest, and most prosperous nation? I'm not going to tell you how I think you should vote. I'm going to show you what the Bible says about how to vote.
3. Does the Bible say anything about politics? Absolutely.
 - i. The first five books of the Bible are called "the Law."
 - ii. Two of the books of the Bible are called "Kings."
 - iii. In Romans 13 Paul devotes almost an entire chapter to the purpose of government and how Christians should relate to it.
 - iv. The Bible may not tell you exactly how to vote on the next election, but it is filled with general principles that can inform us about how to vote on specific issues. Just as the Bible has general principles about marriage, parenting, family, finances, and morality, it has general principles about politics that help us to vote on specific issues.

II. TEXT

1. **1 Timothy 2:1-2** 1 First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2 for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

III. COMMENTS

1. The first thing to notice is that Paul is urging civic engagement. He is saying that Christians should be civically engaged. You should be informed and active. You should stay informed, pray, vote, and consider running for office. Some of you think that this is common sense, but a **2021 study by MyFaithVotes.org** found that 25% of Christians do not vote. A **2016 study** found that only 61 percent of Christians voted in the presidential election.
2. Let me briefly answer **two questions**. **First, should Christians vote?** Yes. Why? Do you want to be governed by righteous laws and leaders? In the USA, the citizens elect the officials who create and enforce the law. If the righteous don't vote, then there will be no vote for righteousness. **Plato** said, "One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors." Are non-Christians inferior? Their morality is inferior, and if Christians don't vote we will be governed by laws and leaders who are morally inferior. Also, **Ronald Reagan** said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. It has to be fought for and defended by each generation." Don't make the mistake of assuming that since the USA is great, it will always be great. There's a reason that it is great. It was built on the foundation of first principles such as equality, inalienable rights, limited government, religious liberty, private property and free enterprise. But there are some people who don't like these first principles, and they would like for our nation to abandon those principles. But if we destroy the foundation of America's greatness, we can easily become Mexico. Do you want your grandkids to live in Mexico? I don't. There's a reason why we have to put a wall on our southern border. Nobody wants to live

- in Mexico; they all want to come to the USA. So yes, Christians should vote.
3. **Here's a second question: Should Christians vote for the lesser of two evils?** This question comes up when you are faced with two candidates – a Republican and a Democrat – and you don't like either one. Many Christians felt this way in the 2016 election between Trump and Hillary. They would never vote for a liberal Democrat, but at the same time, they didn't like Trump. He wasn't exactly a model Christian. So many did not vote at all, or they voted for a third-party candidate, because they didn't want to vote for the lesser of two evils. What should you do? Should you vote for the lesser of two evils? Yes. Why? To get less evil. You will always vote for the lesser of two evils, because all human beings are sinful. Your job in every election is to choose the electable candidate whose character and policies are the least evil. Notice I said "electable." Third-party candidates never win national elections. So if you don't vote, or if you vote third-party, you are making it more likely that the opposite side will win.
 4. Look back at the text where Paul urges Christians to pray for the government. Notice that he doesn't say that you should pray for the government to be erased. It doesn't say that we should pray that there be no government. The Bible is not anti-government. The Bible says that civil government was created by God to be His servant for our good (see Rm 13:1-7). Government is necessary for human flourishing.
 5. In this passage Paul explains exactly how to pray for the government – "so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." By telling us how to pray for the government, Paul is revealing the essential functions of the government. In other words, he is explaining the results of a good and effective government. And if we know the essential functions of the government, then we can know how to vote as Christians.
 6. So let's dig a little deeper and define our terms. First, Paul says to pray for the government "so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life." The

words “tranquil” and “quiet” are synonymous; two Greek words that mean the same thing: free from disturbance. So those two words go together. The next two terms go together as well – “godliness and dignity.” “Godliness” means “devotion to God characterized by a life of conformity to His will (The Expository Dictionary of Bible Words, Hendrickson).” “Dignity” means being worthy of respect, or upstanding character. When you put all this together, the government has three essential functions.

IV. THREE ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT

1. Protect life and property.

- i. **1 Timothy 2:1-2** 1 First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2 for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.
- ii. Go back to the words “tranquil and quiet.” They both mean undisturbed. What disturbances should the government insulate you from? The most essential and basic are the disturbances to your life and property. The government’s most basic job is to protect you from people who want to kill you and steal from you.
- iii. **Thomas Jefferson** “The chief purpose of government is to protect life. Abandon that, and you have abandoned all.”
- iv. **John Locke** “The great and chief end, therefore, of uniting men into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property.”
- v. When the Bible says in the Ten Commandments, “You shall not kill,” and “You shall not steal,” it means that you have the right to life and property; nobody has the right to take those things from you. And the purpose of government is to protect those rights.
- vi. This means for the government to be effective it must have a strong military to protect its citizens from foreign invaders. It must have an effective Army, Navy, and Air Force. A strong national defense.

- vii. Also, it means that the government must have a strong police force and judicial system. It must be highly effective at catching criminals and at keeping them off the streets.
- viii. Earlier I said that the Bible is not anti-government. In fact, government is essential for human flourishing. Why? Because people are sinful. There will always be wicked people who, if given the opportunity, will prey on the weak and innocent. If all men were angels, there would be no need for government. But alas, all men are not angels.

2. Place limits on itself.

- i. Once again, go back to the words “tranquil and quiet,” both meaning undisturbed. The government’s job is to keep its citizens from being disturbed. But foreign invaders and domestic criminals are not the only peace disturbers. One of the biggest peace-disturbers is an invasive, intrusive, and overreaching government. More people in history have been killed by their own governments than by foreign governments. If the government is not checked, it can take your property, your money, your freedom, and even your life. If the government is going to enable you to lead a “tranquil and quiet life”, it must limit itself.
- ii. The Founding Fathers of the USA understood this and established our nation on the principle of limited government. **James Madison** wrote, “If men were angels, no government would be necessary.” If everyone was responsible, and honest, and caring, there would be no need for government. That was the first point. Then **Madison** wrote, “If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.” The Founders had a Biblical view of the wickedness of the human heart. They knew that people were sinful, and that power tends to corrupt, so they were very intentional about making sure that the federal government was limited in what it

could do. For example, the founders put five boundaries in place to limit the federal government:

1. Democracy.

- a. The President and members of Congress are voted in by the citizens. If people are displeased with them, they can be voted out of office.

2. Separation of powers.

- a. The federal government is divided into three branches, and they each have different powers. Congress makes laws, the President, carries out the law, and the Supreme Court interprets and applies the law to individual cases.

3. The Constitution.

- a. The founders created a written constitution which serves as the supreme law of the land. Everyone has to submit to it – even the president, congress, and the supreme court. In fact, when a new president, congressman, or justice takes office, they have to take the oath of office in which they pledge to defend and uphold the constitution. In other words, government leaders can't just do what they want. They have to stay within the boundaries of the constitution.

4. Enumerated powers.

- a. The constitution itself enumerates or specifies exactly what each branch of the federal government can do, and then it says that whatever powers are not enumerated in the constitution to the federal government are reserved for the states.
- b. Listen to the 10th Amendment: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people."

5. Term limits.

- a. Once a politician takes power, they only serve for a limited period before they have run for election again. The president has to run every four years, Senators every six, and Representatives every two.
- iii. I hate to bore you with a civics lesson, but I want to remind you that the Founders understood that one of the essential functions of the government is to limit itself so that it doesn't disturb the citizens. James Madison, for example, in **Federalist Paper 51**, described the challenge that the Founders faced when they were writing the Constitution. On the one hand, they wanted to enable the government to control the governed, or it wouldn't be able to protect life and property. On the other hand, they wanted to compel the government to control itself so that it didn't disturb its citizens. In other words, the role of the government is to keep its citizens from being disturbed while at the same time keeping itself from disturbing its citizens.
- iv. This is why, while the government's job is to keep its citizens from being disturbed, it is important to carefully define "disturbances." It would not be correct to say that the government's job is to insulate its citizens from every disturbance. That would be asking too much. For example, if you were to ask the government to insulate you from financial disturbances, from emotional disturbances, from health disturbances, then that would require the government to become so big, powerful, and expensive, intrusive, and invasive that it would interfere with people living "tranquil and quiet" lives. It is essential for the government to limit itself.

3. Preserve religious liberty.

- i. **1 Timothy 2:1-2** 1 First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2 for kings

and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

- ii. A highly effective government enables its citizens to pursue godliness and dignity. In other words, it protects religious liberty.
- iii. The founders of our nation believed that religious liberty is so important that it is the very first amendment to the constitution. The **first amendment** says, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”
- iv. Why is religious liberty so important? The founders believed in a concept called **The Golden Triangle of Freedom**. Picture a triangle.
 - 1. Liberty requires morality.
 - 2. Morality requires religion.
 - 3. Religion requires liberty.
- v. To explain, the founders first believed that liberty requires morality. If people are not responsible for themselves and respectful of each other (what might be called “self-government”), then they will cry out for the government to expand to solve their problems.
- vi. Next, the founders believed that to encourage widespread morality across the nation, the Christian religion was essential. They weren’t saying that morality was impossible for an atheist, but that the best way to encourage and foster and cultivate it on a wide scale is with the Christian religion.
- vii. Finally, they believed that for the Christian religion to flourish, it required liberty. Can Christianity survive without liberty? Yes. But can it foster the kind of widespread morality needed to support liberty? No.
- viii. Thus, the founders believed that religious liberty was essential for the survival of the nation.

- ix. **President John Adams** (in a speech to military leaders) “We have no government armed with the power capable of contending with human passions, unbridled by morality and true religion. Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”
 - 1. Signed the Declaration of Independence
 - 2. On the Committee of Five who were appointed to draft the Declaration.
 - 3. Second President
 - 4. His son, John Quincy, served as the sixth president.
- x. **James Madison** (author of the U.S. Constitution) “Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind shall be forever encouraged.”
- xi. **George Washington** (first president) “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism who should labor to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness – these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens.”
- xii. So, what have we learned? According to 1 Tim 2:1-2, the government has three essential functions – protect life and property, place limits on itself, and preserve religious liberty. A good government is one that is highly effective at all three of these functions. Now that you know what a good government looks like, you are better equipped to vote.

V. THE CURRENT SITUATION

- i. Before we close, let’s try to apply these principles to our current situation. I don’t want to tell you how to vote or condemn you for voting a certain way. I don’t want to tell you to be a Republican or Democrat. I just want to try to apply the principles we just learned to our current situation. Let’s look at the two major parties – the Republicans and the Democrats – and see which

party most aligns with the three essential functions of the government.

- ii. Let's start with **protecting life and property**. Right now the Democrats are not doing a good job with this.
 - 1. There's the obvious situation of abortion. If you believe that unborn children are human beings, then Democrats are in support of mass murder.
 - 2. They want to defund the police.
 - 3. They want to abolish ICE.
 - 4. They have set up sanctuary cities which refuse to enforce immigration laws.
 - 5. They have allowed the streets of major cities like Los Angeles and Chicago to be taken over by drug and crime-infested homeless encampments.
 - 6. Democratic judges often release violent criminal offenders who go out and repeat their crimes. Last year in Charlotte a 23-year old Ukrainian refugee (a young woman) was fatally stabbed on a train. The man who murdered her had been arrested more than a dozen times and had served five years in prison. He was released by a Democratic judge. Why? Many Democrats believe that incarceration doesn't fix the problem; many of them also view criminals as victims of their environment who simply need to be rehabilitated.
- iii. Second, let's talk about **limited government**. Both parties have fundamentally different philosophies about the role of the government. The Republicans believe fundamentally in limited government. Their mantra is "**that government is best which governs least.**" They believe that the government is necessary, but it needs to do as little as possible and stay as small as possible. It should only do those things that individuals and private organizations and charities cannot do on their own. The Democrats on the other hand believe in big government. They

see the government as the solution to every problem, the answer to every question. The government should pay for everything, fix everything, regulate everything, and that, of course, means tax everything.

- iv. Third, let's talk about **religious liberty**. Both parties claim to value religious liberty, but the Democratic party is currently facing a dilemma. On the one hand they say they value religious liberty, but on the other hand they are highly committed to sexual liberty and reproductive liberty. And over the past several decades, they have allowed sexual liberty to trump religious liberty.
 - 1. For example, they believe that a Christian baker should be forced to create a custom cake for a gay wedding.
 - 2. They believe that a Christian t-shirt maker should be forced to create a gay-pride t-shirt.
 - 3. They believe that a Christian adoption agency should be forced to give children to same-sex couples.
 - 4. They believe that a Christian doctor should be forced to perform abortions,
 - 5. They believe that a Christian pharmacist should be forced to sell abortion-inducing drugs.

VI. CONCLUSION

- 1. I'm so thankful that I have the privilege of living in the USA. I sincerely believe that it is the greatest country in the history of the world.
- 2. And I understand the roots of America's greatness. It was built upon Biblical principles. The founders understood the governments three essential functions – **protecting life, placing limits on itself, and preserving religious liberty**. And as long as we stay tethered to that vision, America will continue to thrive.
- 3. But it's up to you and me. You have to do your civic duty. You have to stay informed. You have to pray. You have to vote. And now you know how.