

What to Do with the Election

Acts 4:23-31

- We are only a week and a half away from yet another monumental, historic presidential election, and there is a great deal at stake.
- The next president will likely appoint justices to the Supreme Court, lead in rulings on marriage, abortion, and religious liberty.
- On top of that, neither of the main presidential candidates has shown themselves to have the greatest character, whether smugly lying or saying things that are not fit to repeat.
- This crazy election has left many believers worried and scared. What are we supposed to do when faced with such a mixed-up set of choices?
- This morning, we are going to talk about that.

- To do that, we are going to take a look at how the first Christians interacted with their government, especially when things weren't going well.
- My goal isn't to tell you how to vote this morning. Instead, what I want to do is show you some biblical principles for you to think through as you look at the options you have before you. As you do, I am hoping you will pray through them, taking into account what we talk about, and asking God to give you clarity as to what to do.

- Open up to **Acts 4:23-31** while I summarize what's taking place.
- In **Acts 2**, the Holy Spirit comes on the believers and officially inaugurates the institution we know of as the church.

- God brings a lot of people to know Him, and things are going well.
 - As the early believers are figuring out what life looks like now that Jesus is gone and they are living life on mission for Him, they keep going back to the temple like the usually did.
 - One morning, as they are going through the temple, a lame man (which means he couldn't walk) calls out to Peter and John.
 - God works through them to heal this man, and it draws a crowd.
 - Peter and John preach to them, telling them that Jesus has made this man well.
 - The Sanhedrin, which is the ruling body of the Jews at this point, arrests them for preaching Jesus. They tell Peter and John they aren't allowed to preach anymore.
 - Peter and John respond that they must obey God, not the Sanhedrin, so the Sanhedrin lets them go after giving them a warning.
 - That's where we pick up the action this morning.
 - Read this section with me, starting in **verse 23**.
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- As the early church prayed, they focused on a key reality of who God is, and that led them to ask God to act in a specific way.
 - Let's look at those, and then we will make specific applications of them at the end of the message this morning.
 - **First, the church's prayer encourages us to...**

1) Remember who's in charge.

- Although Peter and John had just gone toe-to-toe with the most powerful group in the Jewish government, they still recognized that the Sanhedrin wasn't the final authority.

- They recognized that they were responsible to the One who exists above every other authority on earth.
- Look at how they started their prayer in **verse 24**.
- They began by acknowledging that God created every aspect of creation and everything in it, which points to His authority over it: He made the heaven, which describes the sky, the earth, which is the ground, and the sea, which is all the waterways on earth.
- Not only did he create them, he also made everything that went in them.
- God didn't create the world and then sign over the rights to someone else; He made it, and it is His!
- We looked at this in depth a few months back when we looked at **Colossians 1**. We said that because God made it, He has authority over it.
- You know what else God made? He made Hilary Clinton. He made Donald Trump. He made Gary Johnson, and He made Evan McMullin and any other candidate you want to list.
- Don't for a second think that God has relinquished the ability to control any of those men and women to do His work.
- Here's what Solomon tells us in the book of Proverbs:

The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes. (Proverbs 21:1, NASB95)
- That's what is highlighted as the apostles continue to pray. Read **verses 25-28...**
- They point out that a psalm David wrote hundreds of years prior was completely fulfilled by the events of Jesus' trial, death, and resurrection.

- The Roman government didn't want any insurrection, so they killed Jesus at the request of the same Jewish leaders who had just arrested Peter and John.
- Don't miss the critical point, though. Look at **verse 28**...
- All these people rose up against Jesus and brutally murdered Him in the worst injustice in history, yet you see that every step of that was a part of God's plan.
- He knew that the only way for us to be saved was for Jesus to die in our place, so He even used the wicked, evil, jealous government authorities to bring about our salvation.
- Don't miss that! God can, does, and always will work out His plan, even when it is through people who are vile and reprehensible.
- He never loses control of the universe, even when the worst people imaginable are in positions of power.
- Listen to how God is described in Isaiah 40:

Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust. (Isaiah 40:15, NASB95)

All the nations are as nothing before Him, They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless. (Isaiah 40:17, NASB95)

He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. Scarcely have they been planted, Scarcely have they been sown, Scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, But He merely blows on them, and they wither, And the storm carries them away like stubble. (Isaiah 40:23-24, NASB95)

- God makes the judges of the earth meaningless!

- We see that all throughout Scripture.
 - In the book of Exodus, we see God using the wicked Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to send the nation of Israel out into the land God promised them.
 - In **Daniel 4**, we see God take Nebuchadnezzar, who is the most powerful ruler in the world at this point, and make him go insane for a season to show him who the one true God really is.
- Do you think the God who counts the nations as a speck of dust on the scales, who can render the judges of the earth meaningless, and who merely breathes on kings and they wither is afraid about what is going to take place on November 8?
- Certainly, He doesn't want to see wickedness grow, continue, and spread, yet He is not wringing His hands, nor is He worried about what He will do.
- If God isn't worried about it, then why are you?
- I am not saying you should not pray about, speak about, write about, research, or vote in the coming elections. I will say, however, that these elections are nothing to fear.
- "But Sean, if the wrong person gets elected then..."
- Maybe they will, and maybe that will happen, but don't you believe that the God who took the most unjust act in human history, the crucifixion of His Son, and used it for good, is able to do the same in our lives and nation?
- Look again at the words the apostles used to describe how God was at work in Jesus' death (**verse 28**).
- God wasn't just quick on His feet and able to recover; this was all a part of His plan.

- So then, this election, are you willing to trust that He is just as much at work today as He was that day in Jerusalem?
- Remember who is ultimately in charge, and rest in that.
- **Because God is in charge, though, we should join with the apostles in the second part of their prayer:**

2) Be bold.

- Look at **verses 29-30**.
- I think I am as struck by what the apostles didn't pray as by what they did pray.
- They didn't pray, "God, give us leaders who follow you so they can pass laws that make everything easier on us."
- They prayed, "God, you've heard their threats, so make us bold to speak while you do the work only you can."
- Sounds a lot like Elijah, doesn't it?
- Last week, we talked about his prayer on Mt Carmel. He called on God to act so that His name would be glorified.
- The apostles prayed the same thing.
- "God, you've heard the threats they have brought against your people."
- There may be a little bit of fear in that next part of the verse, yet they owned it and asked for they needed to move past it—"in light of their threats, we need Your strength to be bold."
- "And then, God, while we speak boldly, You show that You are the one true God."
- They prayed that God would confirm who He is, even in miraculous ways.

- As you listen to the platforms of all the possible candidates, I am sure hear things that make you nervous. If you are listening, there are items in each platform that should concern us all!
- Yet, even if they are direct threats to our liberty as believers, we need to pray for God to give us boldness.
- We must boldly declare that God is the author of life, and He alone determines when a life begins and ends, including spiritual life that He makes available through Christ.
- We must boldly declare that God cares about the poor, the destitute, the widow, and the immigrant fleeing a war-torn country, and that apart from Christ, we are all cast away from the presence of God and spiritually destitute.
- We must boldly declare that God designed men and women as complementary, unique individuals, and that He designed the love of one man and one woman for one lifetime to reflect His love for the church.
- We must boldly stand against anything that is less than God's best, calling any party or leader to repent of the sins of pride, arrogance, and willful rejection of who God is.
- We must boldly proclaim that our hope and trust is not in a candidate but in Christ Jesus our Lord!
- These bold proclamations must be more than just words, however.
- All those signs and wonders the church prayed for in **verse 30**—how did God choose to do those things? As you read through the rest of the book, God used the people of the church as the human agents of healing and restoration.
- Look at **verse 31**. God answered their prayer, and they boldly proclaimed Christ in a hostile world.

- So, God is in control, and I need to be bold...who do I vote for? How do I vote on this resolution or for this position?
- Here's what I will say:
 - **Vote like God is in charge**—Don't put all your hope in what this candidate may or may not do. Pray and then vote in such a way that you genuinely believe God would be honored.

You may disagree with me on this, but I don't know that the Bible clearly outlines for us exactly who to vote for in this election. Romans 14:23 says this about issues like this, where there may not be a clear-cut answer:

...and whatever is not from faith is sin. (Romans 14:23, NASB95)

You need to prayerfully cast your ballot as you see fit before the Lord.

- **Act like God is in control** – Whatever the outcome of the election, don't let it result in despair.

Additionally, remember to extend grace. You may see this as a very cut-and-dry, black-and-white decision. Other well-intentioned, God-fearing Christians may not see it the same way you do, so don't allow a difference of opinion here divide your friendship and fellowship with other believers.

Not only that, but your neighbor with the huge sign in their yard for that other candidate is still going to be your neighbor when the election is over. Regardless of who wins, the people around us will still need

Jesus. Don't push them away from Christ by being unnecessarily unkind or rude, especially on Facebook.

Act like God is in control. Pray, cast your ballot, and pray some more.

- In the early days of the church, they were faced with a government that couldn't stand them.
- They recognized that they had a greater king, and they followed Him boldly, no matter the cost.
- May we do the same.