

Spirit-Filled Preacher: Is the Day of the Silent Pastor Over?

In light of the current direction of America and the overwhelming silence of pastors going into the next election, I'm re-releasing what I said a few years ago. This article has never been more relevant than it is now.

God has given us a wonderful gift known as America. The government isn't bad or good; her people determine success or failure. Why would God ordain our government and then not want us to steward His gift? Many have been guilty of not getting involved by saying, "We shouldn't say or do anything political. All we need to do is preach the gospel." Be careful—although the gospel is our primary focus, this shouldn't be an excuse against action.

James A. Garfield, an ordained minister and 20th president of the United States, said, "Now, more than ever before, the people are responsible for the character of their Congress. If that body be ignorant, reckless and corrupt, it is because the people tolerate ignorance, recklessness and corruption." We are actually voting for principles, not people—all candidates are sinners. "In what direction will they lead our country?" is the question we should be asking. Even more importantly, what country will we leave for our children?

Don't Keep the Salt in the Shaker

We don't have to abandon our ethics or compromise our principles to be involved in politics—what good is salt left in the shaker, or a light that is hidden? Contextually, when Jesus referred to being the "salt and light," He was referring to holy living at the individual level, but the overlapping principle applies to all areas of life. "Politics" is not a

bad word. In simple terms, politics refers to governing or leading a group of people. Politics won't save America, but in order to implement change and help others, we must take action—hence the political process. Would you have remained silent in the 1800s over slavery? Of course not.

Politics, which once focused largely on the economy, national security and the deficit, now tackles important moral issues. These major issues have enormous implications; to remain silent actually makes a statement that we are not concerned enough. This is not just about the loss of jobs; it's about the loss of morality. We're not just talking about adding millions of dollars to the national deficit; we're talking about aborting millions of babies. We're not only talking about fluctuations in the housing market; we're talking about creating life simply to destroy it. This shift requires us to stay closely involved. Topics that are "too controversial" are often critically important; we can no longer ignore them.

Interestingly enough, the stability of America is one of the top concerns on the minds of many today. There was a time in recent history when America felt secure knowing that the most formidable enemies were abroad. Not so today. While we are concerned with terrorist attacks—and rightly so—there is a greater threat from corruption within. We, like the mighty Roman Empire that collapsed centuries ago, are crumbling from within. There are people and groups who are strongly committed to the destruction of anything rooted in our nation's Christian heritage. They attempt to be "one nation 'above' God," rather than "one nation 'under' God." Scripture identifies this as foolishness, self-exaltation and arrogance—the downfall of nations.

Are We Cowards or Watchmen?

There is a saying that one generation plants trees for the next generation. I'm concerned that instead of planting, we are removing and destroying the very covering that protects

us. As a result, our legacy as a great and noble nation has all but been forgotten. For instance, most schools no longer teach students about the spiritual foundation that has guided America throughout her history. Consequently, America's moral and religious heritage is often deleted, grossly distorted or revised altogether. Students often miss the critical connection between America's unparalleled greatness, her rise to world leadership and the spiritual foundation that made it possible. This should concern us. The ideas of the classroom in one generation will create the ideas of government within the next.

Today, our culture promotes relativism, and man does what is right in his own eyes. Again, according to Scripture, to his own destruction. God's Word says to confront, confess and turn from our sins; relativism encourages us to ignore, overlook and continue in them. Although this position may seem radical or extreme, we are living in extremely critical times. Make no mistake about it: We are witnessing the rapid deterioration of a nation right before our eyes. But there is hope. 2 Chronicles 7:14 calls out from the past with resounding clarity to America today: "And My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

There are times to encourage, motivate and uplift, but there are also times to confront, challenge and contend for what is right. That time is now. Let it not be said of us today: "And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord" (Judg. 2:10b). The day of the silent pastor who is more concerned about nickels and noses must end. Are we pleasing God or men? Are we cowards or watchmen? {eo}

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