



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 6

July 21, 2019

No. 29

## OUR PATRIOTIC ZEAL

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I originally wrote this article last November for our local newspaper. At that time I observed that once all of the hubbub regarding the 2018 mid-term elections was over, the various governments in our nation could get back to the business of doing what governments are supposed to do [eye-roll]. Of course, it was soon thereafter “politics as usual” in “a deeply-divided nation” with finger-pointing, blame-shifting, and political spin and posturing happened at every opportunity.

Fundamentally, this continually happens because there are major philosophical differences about what the business of government actually is. Despite this lack of national consensus, I am happy to live in a land where these philosophies can be freely debated and voted on every two to four years in relative peace. However, we are very sadly mistaken if we think that civil government, democratic or otherwise, is the solution to our problems. As the political voices get louder in anticipation of next year’s 2020 presidential election, now is an appropriate time to remind Christians of where our focus and emphasis should be.

All of mankind’s real problems are rooted in sin. Liberals, moderates, and conservatives *all* sin (Rom. 3:23). To one degree or another, they all want the freedom to continue in sinful ways while simultaneously wanting the freedom from the consequences of those sins, and *this* is impossible. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption [i.e. real problems], but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life [the overcoming of real problems]” (Gal. 6:7,8).

It is the inclination of people to imagine that the solutions to our deepest problems are within the grasp of human ingenuity, but they are not. Indeed, this is the message of Scripture. If mankind *could* solve its most pressing problems without God, then there would have been no need for God to reveal His will to us. There would have been no need for His grace. There would have been no need for the cross of Christ.

While our currency says, “In God We Trust,” it is becoming increasingly evident that this simply is not true. This is an archaic statement which possibly reflected the genuine faith of some influential forefathers, but it does not reflect the majority of Americans anymore (and likely never did). How do I know this? Because if this nation truly trusted in God, we would be approaching our problems in fundamentally different ways. We would be trusting in God’s ways as revealed in His Word. Instead, both “evangelical conservatives” and “compassionate liberals” are hitching their hopes to politicians and their government solutions to solve our societal problems which, at their core, are actually spiritual problems.

“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes” (Ps. 118:8,9). If we think this has no application to our presidents or senators or congressional representatives or judges, we are woefully deceived and are a part of the problem rather than the solution.

Certainly, it is right that we pray for “all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Tim. 2:2). It is right that we give due honor to those in authority over us (cf. Rom. 13:7; 1 Pt. 2:13-17). Yet, “When you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; and put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food” (Prov. 23:1-3). Our present rulers

are not exceptions to this warning.

It has been observed that politics makes strange bedfellows. Fellow saints, we will not solve our problems by “getting in bed” with politicians. We will solve our problems by being faithful to our God. Corruption is contagious! “If a ruler pays attention to lies, all his servants become wicked” (Prov. 29:12). It is not loyalty to a party or government officials which exalts a nation. “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). Remember, we “desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.” Whether you believe the United States of America was once great and can be great again or you believe that it remains great or has never been great, let us remember that our true citizenship is in Heaven (Phil. 3:20). Therefore, our patriotic zeal should be directed toward Heaven. So, as the next election cycle heats up, let us rise above the fray with faith and unashamedly identify ourselves with Jesus Christ as the One Who alone can solve our problems.

Think Magazine July – September 2019

## “Let Me First . . .”

- by Michael W. McLemore

On one occasion Christ heard these words, “I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house” (Luke 9:61). Some say, when confronted with the passionate pleas of the Gospel, “Let me first get my education, a better job, a home, a new automobile, and the other necessary things of life.”

These folks have a place for Christ in their lives – second place! They seem convinced that material security will somehow prepare them to follow Christ. Such a perception fails to grasp the meaning of Christ’s words: “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15).

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). Many have actually reversed the saying of Christ and are seeking first the wealth of the world thinking the kingdom of God will be added unto them. To gain the entire world and to lose Christ is to lose all (Mark 8:36,37)

There is nothing wrong with having a good education, a better job, a home, a new or better car. The harm is in allowing these things to take precedence over the things of God’s kingdom. What is first in your life? Is it money, pleasure, education, or is it Christ Jesus?