



DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-6

MARCH 2015

Dual Citizenship

Recently, there were reports of another protest at the Texas State Capitol. The protest coincided with a group of Muslim Americans who visited for the stated purpose of learning how state government works.

They also had some policy issues for which they wanted to lobby. The protest (including many self-declared Christians) confronted the visitors with chants of “No Sharia!” making very clear their objection to Muslims being there. Clearly, there are forces at work here such as a fear of terrorism and fear of an Islamic take-over, but there’s also some misinformed minds and some misguided zeal about the Christian’s role in a democratic society.

Christians have the challenge of being citizens of two nations. We are sons and subjects in the Kingdom of God, and we are also part of the nation on earth in which we hold citizenship. Paul wrote to Timothy,

who was leading the citizens of the Kingdom in their responsibility as citizens of their earthly society. We are instructed by his exhortation:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one

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mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

1 Timothy 2:1-6 (ESV)

Living as Christians means that we live as partners with God. That was the original design, and Jesus restored the privilege. Our mandate to subdue looks a little different from Adam's tilling the garden, but we each are given our own garden. Our garden consists of the people and things regarding which we have responsibility.

Prayer is the first priority for partnering with God. He has the resources, and we are his physical representatives on

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the physical earth. We live in dependence upon him and fulfill our assignments. The original temptation in the Garden included

the suggestion that we could get the job done without daily dependence upon God. We could know as much as he does, and therefore we would not need to check in regularly. The biblical account of Babel is an illustration of what humans do when they are attempting to subdue without dependence upon God.

We affect social structures when we pray as God's partners. Paul told Timothy to pray for rulers and the structures that govern the societies we live in. Why? Since we are children of the invisible Kingdom that will never pass away, why do we really care about temporal governments? They are focused on things that are temporal. Eventually, they all deteriorate, right? The Christian perspective is that God cares for all his creation, believers and unbelievers. He desires that people live peaceable lives and that they experience the flourishing bounty he has placed within his good creation. Rulers who rule effectively, rule by the authority of moral consensus. People have a right and responsibility to have a say in their government. If we want to improve the government, we must pray and work to affect the moral consensus.

The best and most effective way to accomplish that is by serving our neighbors and promoting the gospel. We know that true peace in the heart comes when we are reconciled to God by the mediation of Jesus, who took the hostility between God and mankind and made us friends instead of enemies. People who are warring in their hearts will not produce a social structure that renders a peaceable life. But we serve our neighbors before they agree with us on the gospel or the morals that come from it. We share the life of Jesus who washed the feet of Judas even though he knew he was the betrayer. He fed people who would later join the cry of the crowd to crucify him.

We must also be aware that societal culture can not only color our gospel, but also counter it. Humans celebrate their own honor. We like to live independently, and we like to think without interference from God. We tend to define reality by our powers of observation and ignore the greater revelation that comes from a higher perspective. But citizens of the Kingdom of God have a king who does not rule by moral consensus. He rules by the

power of his own love. His love declares that there is one God and that he can be known. He has revealed himself fully in

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Jesus, who exchanged his life for ours so that we could enjoy God the Father as he does. This narrative is the story of the Bible, and it shows that Jesus is the climax of the story—the only hope of anyone being restored to original destiny. His love has left no confusion. One need not try all other avenues. There is one way, and it is open to everyone without distinction. Only the proud and blind insist on more options.

When we don't take seriously our role in affecting our society, it will affect our gospel. Paul had this problem in Corinth. Corinthian culture was steeped in democratic ideology with a high priority put on the intelligence and independence of the human mind. They valued public opinion, achieved honor, celebrity status, entertainment, approving crowds, and success measured by personal victories. They loved

novel ideas and made room for all religions, boasting of their broad-minded inclusivism. There were some leaders who accused Paul of being an inferior apostle because he did not feature these cultural priorities. He had recognized the power of that culture, and to show the distinct difference in Kingdom life, he had intentionally refused to impress them with personality or oratory. He wanted the people to be impressed by

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the content of the message rather than the impressiveness of the messenger. He was more interested in creating a joyful community than gathering a happy crowd. He boasted in his weaknesses rather than in his strengths. He addressed the needs of the people's hearts rather than appeal to their wants. So he purposed to focus on Jesus. Who is he? What has he done? ". . . *Jesus Christ and him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

We have similar challenges today. We, too, live in a country with democratic ideology and all the things that accompany that. Sadly, as we look around it seems that our culture has affected the gospel more than the gospel has affected the culture. It is time for citizens of the Kingdom of God to embrace our earthly assignment and engage our earthly culture with the only truth that will set people free.

If we do, we will be diligent to serve our neighbors and to make our part of the world a better place for everyone—even those who don't agree with us. That might say what we want to say better than shouting at those we fear.



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