



Responsibility of Freedom

A number of years ago, I was visiting with two pastors from another country and discussing the many faults of the United States of America. In the course of our conversation, I commented that “we who are preachers have dropped the banner of responsibility for, not only proclaiming truth from our pulpits, but crusading for truth in the public arena.” Both these two men stated their position on the subject, that we are to be passive in the public forum and do little if anything about public ills. Each man cited the Scriptures as basis for his position stating that we have no record of Jesus or any of his followers “picketing” or “marching” in behalf of a cause. While it is true that Jesus never led anyone in a public debate over any social concern, I do believe that as Americans and as Christians, we have a clear responsibility to “tend” for and carefully guard the nation that we have been given.

The governmental situation in Jesus’ day was quite different from the system that we enjoy in America. While we, as Americans, should not arrogantly consider ourselves a privileged people who is better than anyone else, we are, most definitely a uniquely blessed people. A short perusal of American history does nothing but confirm God’s gracious hand in the founding of this nation as well as His Sovereign control in our affairs. With blessing comes responsibility. The early Virginia Baptists believed this and thundered a message of righteousness from their pulpits. Men like John Leyland and John Witherspoon preached with such fervor the gospel message that they suffered imprisonment for their courageous declaration. These men understood that their involvement in the affairs of government, as preachers, was also part of their responsibility. Instantly, when a preacher today mentions any involvement in the arena of government, he is criticized for intimating such involvement. However, how can we who are stewards of the truth do otherwise. Our founding fathers never imagined a day when a “separation of church and state” would be interpreted as isolation of church from state. This is clear from the overwhelming number of religious references that are an inseparable part of our history. This past summer, while in Washington DC for our crusade, I was asked by a French film interviewer, “How do you, Mr. Kistler, blend patriotism and faith in your meetings?” To answer his question, I referred him to the painting of Pocahontas, which hangs in the rotunda of our U.S. Capitol. Her baptism is depicted there as an integral part of our history. Above the Supreme Court building, Justice holds in her hands the Ten Commandments. Each session of both houses of our Congress begin with prayer to the Almighty God for wisdom and direction. The Washington Monument itself has engraved on the very pinnacle of its exterior the words “Praise be to God.” Verses of Scripture adorn the walls of the inside of that same monument, visible to anyone who walks the steps from bottom to top. God and

government do intersect. In America, with our unique form of government, “of the PEOPLE, by the PEOPLE, and for the PEOPLE” we, the PEOPLE, have a responsibility to be involved as a steward of our freedoms, and not merely be a “freeloader.”

Our responsibilities to our government involve the following things:

- 1) We must PRAY for our government and its leaders (I Tim. 2:1-4) (Note verse 4, that the purpose of our praying, in context, is that they might be saved.)
- 2) We must a PAY for our government and its leaders (Romans 13:6-7)
- 3) We must PRAISE government and its leaders when they are praiseworthy (Romans 13:3)
- 4) We must PERFORM for government (that is obey its laws: vote) (Romans 13:1-2)
- 5) We must PARTICIPATE in government and its leadership
- 6) We must PREACH to government and its leaders (we have Jonah, Daniel, Nathan the Prophet, and Paul as examples of this)

I urge you to not only consider these responsibilities, but also become an active participant in fulfilling your responsibility. We who are older will soon leave to our children a nation that we have helped to create. At present, I do not like what I see. I desire to be an agent for change that will allow us the privilege to continue to preach the glorious gospel and see men changed individually and our nation revived collectively.

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