

Church and Politics

by Bryan Gibson

It didn't used to be a problem, but it is now—churches becoming more and more involved in the political process. It is just one symptom of a larger problem—churches setting aside their heavenly mission for a more earthly one.

Look through the New Testament, search for all the activities in which local churches were engaged, and you just won't find any involvement in the political arena. They did not stage or organize any boycotts or protests, despite the fact that they were often oppressed by the government. They did not use their resources to influence government policies. They preached the gospel (1 Corinthians 2:1-5), not political rhetoric. Granted, these churches did not function in the midst of a democratic society, but there was still a noticeable lack of any political involvement.

These same New Testament churches did not set out to reform society per se, but to save people's souls. Their goals were spiritual (Ephesians 4:11-16), not political. When given the opportunity to speak to government officials, preachers were more concerned with bringing these officials to the Lord than making them better leaders (Acts 24:24-25; 26:27-29). Sin was, and still is, the most serious issue facing any country, and the only cure for it is the saving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16). People can die and go to heaven, no matter what political system they live in, but they cannot go to heaven in their sins.

Churches who understand their mission will promote loyalty to the Lord, not to a particular candidate or party. Wouldn't it be a shame to cause division in a church over which candidate to support? Teach the principles of righteousness found in the New Testament, and that may influence how individuals vote, but don't start staging rallies for a particular candidate.

Churches should, however, speak out against the many sins that are often found in the political arena, and there are plenty to be found in both major parties. Greed, deceit, envy, strife, sexual immorality, murder (yes, those who support abortion qualify)—these are just some of the sins that seem to flourish in the political environment. John the Baptist didn't hesitate to rebuke Herod's sins (Mark 6:17-18; Luke 3:19-20), and Paul didn't hold back on governor Felix (Acts 24:24-25). We may not get the same opportunity these men did—to speak directly to the offenders—but we still must speak out. These sins are often highly publicized, so it gives us a great opportunity to make a point to the world—to show them the difference between what God demands and what we're getting. We must show proper respect for our officials; we must pray for them; we must submit to them (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-17), but we still have to speak out against sin. It may not lead the rulers themselves to the Lord, but it may very well lead someone else.