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By Don Overcash

Christians Called to Be Salt and Light, Even in Politics

“...the vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice...” Lyndon B. Johnson, August 6, 1965

The metaphors of being "salt and light" to the world (Matthew 5:13-16) are not just guiding principles for personal morality, but also for engaging in the public square, including voting. It is important to remember that Jesus did not say to his disciples to consider being salt and light. Jesus told His followers they are salt and light.

Political discussions can become divisive, even within the Christian community. Party lines and candidate preferences are determined with such fervor that the core teachings of Christianity can be overshadowed. It's crucial for believers to discern and prioritize their spiritual convictions over political partisanship and not the other way around.

Putting salt and light in political context is a challenge. Being "salt" means preserving the values of the Kingdom of God and enhancing the flavor of divine grace in a world that often tastes bitter. The Gospel calls Christians to preserve human dignity, justice, mercy, and truth. When voting, this might mean supporting policies and candidates who uphold these values.

Light symbolizes the illumination of truth and of Christ's love. In political engagement, this involves shining a light on injustice, corruption, violence, and deceit. It means advocating for policies that reflect the Gospel's concern for the "least of these" (Matthew 25:40). This is done not for political power but flows out of a heart that has been renewed by God's sacrificial love.

Obediently living out our identity as biblical salt and light is challenging. The first challenge is to resist the notion of seeking earthly saviors. This search often reflects our deep-seated desire for immediate relief and guidance in times of distress. Scripture implores believers to recognize the illusion that any earthly figure could fulfill such a role and redirects faith towards a divine and eternal God.

Another challenge is to not be deceived. In an era of "fake news" discernment is key. Christians should critically evaluate the information they consume, checking it against scripture and prayerfully considering the implications of their political options.

Thirdly, Christians must recognize that political parties and their candidates are imperfect vehicles for achieving God's purposes on earth. While they can enact policies that appear to align with Christian values, they can also fall short or mislead for their own gain. Vigilance and wisdom are required to see through attempts to conflate party and

candidate platforms with the eternal salvation found in the Gospel of Jesus. Christians are also challenged to call out candidates and policies that fly in the face of Godly wisdom and to pray for those in authority (1Timothy 2:1-4).

Lastly, the church must relearn to engage in respectful and meaningful conversations with fellow believers who hold different political views. Collectively we need to discuss and discern how to apply biblical wisdom in a manner that honors God and attracts people to His agape love. These discussions, approached with humility, can help identify common ground and sharpen understanding of how scriptural principles apply to contemporary issues. Proverbs 29:2 reminds us that “When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan.” This verse underscores the impact of governance on societal well-being and the responsibility of the righteous to promote just leadership through their votes.

As Christians, the call to be salt and light extends to all areas of life, including the political arena. In an age where political propaganda often seeks to exploit religious beliefs, it is important to uphold the principles of the Gospel and let them guide our political decisions. By doing so, Christians can transcend partisan politics and contribute to a more just and godly society. Micah 6:8 instructs, “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” This captures the essence of Christian engagement in politics - acting justly through civic participation, loving mercy by supporting policies that uplift rather than oppress, and walking humbly, recognizing our ultimate citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).