

Re: Political Activism

An Email Exchange . . .

(Cover Letter sent to introduce the email conversation)

Greetings Friends,

As a teacher in the Body of Christ, it is my responsibility to find ways to edify the Church regarding our God-given directives. As many of you are aware, I believe our Christian mission is expressed by the revelation contained in the New Testament Epistles. So, in order to assure our actions are based on this truth and not on traditions-added-over-time we must diligently consider this part of Scripture.

In keeping with this guideline, for a number of years I have contemplated writing something which addressees the conduct believers are taught to have in regard to unbelievers and secular society. So after recently corresponding with two brothers on this topic, I have concluded it profitable to share these discussions with you. As you read them in the attached PDF, you will see my primary reason for sharing is because I believe some things commonly practiced by believers today actually damages our Christian testimony.

I have not edited the letters written to me, but I have altered my responses to generalize them and make them understandable for a wider audience. As you read the first attached letter appearing in blue type, you will be brought into an ongoing discussion between me and a fellow believer although he and I share a longstanding relationship. Continued correspondence is prompted by a second brother, who received a copy of the first letter. His emails are highlighted in red type and my responses are in black type.

Regarding the subject of social/political involvement, these discussions are brief, at least when compared with the vast amount of potential issues that could be discussed. In essence, they represent just the tip of the iceberg.

After reading these letters, if you would like, feel free to comment. Please know, I will only consider dialog that is gracious and tied to specific supporting Scripture.

(Written mid-November, 2020)

Good morning brother,

Since I have some time today, just wanted to share some thoughts concerning the news story you sent regarding President Trump speaking out publicly about Christmas commemorating the birth of Christ. My first thought brought me back to a conversation I had a few months ago with a friend of mine who knows the Word well and questions whether the President knows the Lord. His opinion is based in part on hearing the President being interviewed earlier this year in which the interviewer mentioned that Christianity is about the need for forgiveness of sin. The President's response was that he doesn't need forgiveness. Actually, I too heard him say this in the same interview. Whether or not he believes in salvation based on Christ's death on the cross is an enigma to me, which is also true in regard to most politicians who make a habit of citing extracts from the Bible (usually out of context) just because they know this is what people want to hear.

Furthermore, whether or not he is a believer makes no difference to me, for he operates in the world's realm (human government) of which Satan is the god during this age. On the other hand, the Letters written to the Church consistently teach God's dictates for Christians which can be summed up to consist of evangelizing the lost and edifying the saved. Both of these purposes can only be carried out apart from the world's arena since they must be accomplished by those who have the indwelling Spirit. And, Paul never teaches we should involve ourselves in trying to change the world's system (2 Tim. 2:4). So, professing Christians or other religious people who are trying to change society have to find support for their endeavors from other teachings in the Bible, and predominantly they turn to contexts in the Law of Moses and Law related Scripture. However, those revelations were given specifically in regard to God's plan with the Nation of Israel and applying them otherwise is in essence to adulterate the Word of God – not apply it as was literally intended. God never gave these Scriptures to govern any other country than Israel, including the U.S., nor did he give the Law to regulate His present-day people who are the spiritual group He created and called the **Body of Christ, the Church** (Col. 1:18, 24).

In 1 Tim. 2:1-4 we are instructed to pray for all men, among whom leaders are singled out, that we might lead a peaceful and quiet life. This passage basically says we are to pray that they might be permissive toward Christians so we will be able to do our mandated job. Citing this passage with the view it teaches us to pray for our nation to be godlier or for laws to be instituted which are closer to Christian ideals is not mentioned, therefore, not intended. Perhaps this passage may include praying for their salvation. However, no support exists in this context

or in the rest of Paul's letters that would indicate we are to take social action by our communication or human endeavor for the purpose of trying to change society. We are simply to follow Paul's example (Phil. 4:8-9).

Understanding what his example is can be observed in Acts when he appealed to appear before Caesar making use of his Roman citizenship. This was his right as a Roman citizen so this request was granted to him. He did this because otherwise he would have been transferred from Caesarea back to Jerusalem and the Jews would have killed him in transit. Note, he used rights provided to him in the system he was born into, but he never pursued any action to try to change it. He did appear before Caesar and was subsequently released after his first Roman captivity (last few verses of Acts). Then, in Second Timothy he speaks about his impending death at the dictate of Caesar. It is significant we have no record that he ever complained about Caesar's decision either time, but was fully subject to it with his routine joyful attitude – no grumbling. He simply accepted the earthly dictate and continued to carry out our God-given directive of evangelism and edification until his execution.

In addition, he did not ask Timothy or other believers to pray for his release, for he knew God was in control of his life and death (2 Tim. 4:16-18). The record shows what he does ask prayer for when he was in captivity which is that he might have an open door to make known the mystery of the gospel for which he was an ambassador (Eph. 6:18-20). Even during his imprisonments Paul always stayed on cue, in line with what the Lord told him to do in his life and ministry. He practiced what he preached in Romans 13:1-7 about being subject to earthly authorities. We are supposed to follow his example and live a peaceful and quiet life in this world while obeying what we are told to do (1 Thess. 4:9-13).

Applying this to the present election. Mr. Trump has used the courts to contest the election. If the courts side with him, we should accept their decision and him as a second-term president. However, if the courts do not side with him and Joe Biden is recognized as president, we should accept that decision, that is, be subject and have a joyful, Christian attitude without complaining or scheming. I am actually glad 5 of the 9 justices on the Supreme Court are so-called 'conservatives' because if they don't agree with the President's challenges, he has nothing to complain about since similarly-labeled people to himself would have made this decision according to US constitutional law. WE ARE TOLD TO BE SUBJECT TO RULING AUTHORITIES and the Supreme Court, superior to all other rulers in this country, possesses the authority to give final judgment in all matters.

As you know, I believe political and societal philosophies have nothing to do with Christianity. If believers would spend their time studying and applying the

"mystery" truth for the Church found in Paul's Letters instead of spending their time listening to secular 'social influencers' on radio programs, Fox, CNN, ABC, NBC, CBS or other news channels/sources, we would be far more equipped and effective for the Lord. We would also do well to ignore the voluminous so-called 'Christian' social complaints which are expressed by verbal or active defiance to authorities, and much of it is shamefully rooted in conspiracy theories about what those in the world might be doing. Satan loves to 'divert' believers from doing what we are actually instructed to do by God. He tempts believers to get off on 'tangents' which, in turn, waters down our message by getting us involved in fleshly/world-related issues. He always mixes his error with some truth, but if you understand Paul's teaching, the resultant philosophy of amalgamating error with truth always results in error and deception. A little leaven leavens the whole lump, and the fact that adding works to grace which mitigates grace is only one way by which this happens (1 Cor. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:1-5).

As you can see I chose to send this to some others in my circle of fellowship as I think this is of utmost importance for believers to consider as they seek to follow the divine directions for the Church.

With the sincerest of love, Chuck

Chuck,

Do you vote?

Good morning, _____. Thank you for your question. Actually, I have not voted since the late '80s although my wife does vote. She freely does so and I do not criticize her choice in this matter.

Many Christians consider my action of not voting absurd at best and some regard it as highly disobedient to what God wants believers to do. With that in mind, I could share a tremendous amount as to why, but I will begin with the following:

During the mid-80's, we were home-schooling our kids, part of which involved the use of Christian history books. At work, I had a fellow employee who had been raised Episcopalian (Church of England) and we discussed religion and politics a lot. One day I mentioned that Thomas Jefferson was a Christian and he laughed

at me. I went home and found that Deb had already realized he wasn't a believer, or certainly didn't live like one, and by that time she had also abandoned the so-called Christian history books since they appeared to alter historical facts about as much as the secular ones do. Thomas Jefferson did go to seminary, William and Mary, an Episcopalian seminary. Then, he used his knowledge of the Bible to get elected, mostly by citing biblical concepts out of context. But, he still conducted his life however he wanted including having children with his slave women. It is well documented that he hated true Bible believers, those trusting in salvation through Christ led by John Adams, and he politically affiliated himself with those who were in opposition.

One of my mentors, Ruel Glover, was socially passive in every way, but when I fellowshiped with him I had little interest in this issue so I never asked about the reasons for his stand, thus, I never fully understood why. Later, I came to realize his position stemmed from his understanding of the spiritual nature and mission of the Church. During that same time when I attended and taught at Bible school (1976-1984), I did have extensive discussions about social/political activism with the head of the school. In our conversations, we both recognized there were no exhortations in the Letters written to the Church which supported the idea believers should be socially/politically active. Although, one time he shared this reason for doing so, 'the Baptists are active in politics so it must be right'. That concept seemed odd to me then. And, as I progressively sought to discover reasons for my actions from the Word, as well as for the lifestyle of all believers, I abandoned following anyone's convictions if they lacked a biblical base.

Since then and over the years, I have personally scoured the Book of Acts and Paul's letters wherein we find Church practice, and I find no commands, implications or indications we should participate in societal change or seek to effect it. On the contrary, we are presented with one consistent and clear message in regard to our actions toward unbelievers – sharing the gospel for salvation. We are taught to follow the example Paul gives us, who limited his own ministry to preaching the cross of Christ with unbelievers (1 Cor. 2:1-5). All moral teachings in the Epistles are always and only directed to believers who have the ability to please God since we have the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:7-8). **Unbelievers do not have this divine help, therefore, they cannot live a lifestyle that truly pleases God.**

Also, in Acts and the Epistles, there is no indication God is effecting His purpose with nations during this dispensation, only with individuals he places in the Body by saving both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 9:11-14, 24-25). Scripture which regards a nation being God's people is always written directly to and intended for the Nation of Israel. This national purpose of God was effective from Genesis chapter 12 when He chose Abraham and extends up until the offer of the

Kingdom to Israel in the beginning of Acts. But, shortly after Christ was raised from His death on the cross and the national Jewish leaders rejected Him as their Messiah, God's program with this Nation was postponed and has remained inactive for nearly 2000 years (Acts 3:12-26; 7:1-60; Rom. 11:11-36). It will pick up again when Christ returns for the Church and reestablishes Israel in the Promise Land according to God's Old Testament promises, all of which will complete the New Covenant prophecies. However, as Paul states, today unbelieving Israelites are "enemies of the gospel" (Rom. 11:28; 1 Theses. 2:14-16).

When Catholics, Episcopalians, Mormons and many other so-called Christian denominations or groups apply these contexts about nations to either the US and/or their church, the Scripture is not being applied with its literal intent. For today, during the dispensation of grace, God's people are made up of saved Jews and Gentiles whom God has placed into **the spiritual Body of Christ**. Paul teaches our citizenship exists in this Body and it is 100% heavenly, not earthly in nature (Phil. 3:20-21). This also means the present day secular Nation of Israel which was established by human might is not God's people – only individual Jews who trust in Christ are included as children of God. The O.T. promises make one thing abundantly clear about the reestablishment of Israel in the Promise Land, when this event happens, it will be obvious to all that this was accomplished solely by God's might. So, at that time, He alone will receive all the glory.

Lastly, let me contrast our Christian constitution (Paul's letters that administer the Church) with the US Constitution which most believers think is so Christian in nature based on the traditional teaching they receive and follow. For instance, the statement we have inalienable rights endowed by the Creator is simply not biblically true. For, it goes on to describe some of these rights as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Well, according to the Word for the Church we are not guaranteed physical life, but more importantly eternal spiritual life in Christ. It does not promise us physical liberty in this life except in that we have the ability to have freedom from the control of sin. And, it does not guarantee us the right to pursue happiness in this world, except when we experience joy in our heart, mind and conscience as we walk in the Spirit to please the Lord.

I could go on and on about contrasts between Scripture and human-generated U. S. law, but my main point is if we go strictly from the truth intended to administer the Church, involvement in the widely accepted practice of bringing America Back to God (I believe it never was God's) or bringing in the Kingdom would have no place in our purpose. These endeavors come from applying Scripture to the Church which God directed toward His program with Israel. Ironically, so many

believers I hear misapply Scripture in this way, at the same time, often criticize others for not applying truth from the Bible in its literally-intended sense.

I would be glad to discuss this further if you would like.

In Him, Chuck

Just a few things to consider.

1. As you mentioned in your earlier email, Paul—although declaring himself a citizen of heaven—did use his rights as a Roman citizen to his advantage on more than one occasion. The one does not abrogate or annul the other.
2. Since voting or any other mode of effecting the local or national government was not an option in Paul's day, there was no reason whatsoever for him to encourage people do that. They would not have had any idea what he meant and it probably would have sounded more like insurrection.
3. While a primary purpose of prayer is for us to get more in tune with the will of God, it cannot be dismissed that another purpose is to move the hand of God. Praying for their leaders was about the only way that believers in the First Century had available to them to alter the course of human events in the political realm. Praying for one's leaders is not merely for their salvation but also for them to more closely have the mind of God in their decisions. That was certainly Paul's primary intent in appealing to Caesar--to present the Gospel to him, not merely to get released. I imagine this is one reason he did not press more actively (as far as we know) for immediate release when he was in prison. His influence on "the Praetorian Guard and to all the rest" (referring to those in the upper echelons of the government and "those of Caesar's household") brought him greater contact for the Gospel to those in leadership in Rome than his freedom ever would have. That is precisely his point in Philippians 1:12 ff.
4. Christ's "You have heard it said..." statements were intended to bring the national thought and decision-making back to being in line with God's original intent for the Nation, and nothing of what Paul writes seems to contradict it. We as believers in the present dispensation are not prohibited from trying to bring our nation's conduct and laws more in line with the current instructions of God's word, not only at the individual, personal level, but since it is available to us, at the governmental level as well.

5. Along those lines, Paul's instruction in 1 Cor. 7:21 for slaves to change their status if possible by becoming free in no way contradicts verse 24. If slaves are instructed to better their situation if possible—changing their political and life status if they have the ability to do so—it is certainly in line for believers today to better our situation in whatever legal, moral methods that are possible.
6. Believers are not to be revolutionaries nor act against the government. I do sometimes wonder if those of faith in the US Revolution really had the right motives at the time, but it cannot be questioned that God has used this country in many good ways worldwide, ways that are quickly waning as this country continues to move away from Christian values. If there are legal and moral methods for Christians to slow or reverse that trend—at all levels—we should. Otherwise we are akin to those who would wish someone “be warmed and fed” but do nothing for them when it is in their power to help. We are not merely to be involved in the spiritual needs of people but their physical needs too. That is consistent in all dispensations; Moses commanded it, Christ continued it and James affirmed it. Paul supported it with his collections for those in Jerusalem, many of whom were certainly Judaizers, and likely unsaved.

Good last day of 2020, _____! Debi and I are taking an RV trip south leaving on Jan. 5, so we are getting necessary things done around home before we leave. We had nice Christmas gatherings with our kids and 8 grands. Thank you for the points you raised regarding the subject of social activism. I will endeavor to address those with the following.

Your first point about Paul utilizing the rights he had as a Roman citizen, I do recognize. It is just as important, however, to note how he used his rights as the fact he did use them. At one point, Paul used his citizenship so he would not get beaten as a criminal and another time when he appealed to Caesar so the Jews would not have their way in having him transferred to Jerusalem from Caesarea with a plan to kill him on the way. He never once used his rights to try to change Roman law, government or society, nor did he ever tell believers to get involved in these kind of activities. Thus, I would see that believers are able to use rights granted by the country in which they reside to the extent that they can do this and not violate other teachings with regard to the Christian life - more on this later.

Your second point is not fully true. Upper class Roman citizens did have the ability to propagate their interests in government and in Acts there are statements that many prominent people were saved. Also, policemen, military personnel and other people holding city offices were saved. Furthermore, in the Roman Empire, officials appointed people to powerful positions. If God had

wanted Christians to take advantage of or pursue these available paths to power, exhortations would exist to do so. However, we see absolutely nothing in Paul's writings which encourages this.

The third point you raised regarding prayer moving the hand of God, I fully agree with. Though, again, it is important to follow what Paul tells believers to pray for in relation to all men and governing officials (1 Tim. 2:1-4). The prayer is for believers to be able to live a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and respectability. To me, this basically says we are to pray that leaders will allow Christians to be left alone so we can practice our faith. Then, the passage goes on to give the purpose for this, "God desires all men to be saved and come to a full knowledge of the truth". This statement expresses the complete job we are told to do throughout the Epistles. Our only message for unbelievers is to demonstrate the gospel in our actions so they will see us as respectable and, thus, we will have opportunities to verbally share about salvation in Christ with them. In reference to the Church, all believers are responsible to use our gifts to do the work of ministry and build up the Body of Christ so all might come to a full knowledge of the truth (Eph. 4:8-13).

You mentioned that believers are to pray leaders would 'have the mind of God'. Although this idea can be found in Jewish Scripture, to my knowledge it cannot be found in the Epistles written to Christians. And, your point that prayer is the only possible way they had to change society in the Roman Empire is not so as I referenced above. On the other hand, **it is the only way Christians are taught to deal with earthly authorities.** This divinely-provided method works under any government men can devise and, when used, it is the way believers have been able to effectively sway men while obeying God throughout all the history of the Church. In this world, protest or political pressure always engenders a reaction/retaliation. When Christians actively oppose philosophies promoted by unbelievers, our efforts shift their focus toward these secular challenges and tend to close their minds to our primary objective of sharing the gospel of salvation. So, **we should be putting our efforts into Evangelism since it is our only God-mandated directive toward the world.** And, we are repeatedly told not to place any stumbling block in the way of sharing the gospel with the lost. Instead, we are to become all things to all men that some might be saved. As Paul closes out this context he says, "become imitators of me as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:19-27; 10:31-11:1).

Also, you mentioned that certainly the reason Paul appealed to Caesar was to evangelize him. I do not find that concept in any stated purpose or recorded happening in the Word. Of course, when Paul was in prison, he evangelized those in his presence which was his practice where ever he went whether bound or free. He did this with the Praetorian Guard as you pointed out; also the

Philippian jailer, Festus, Felix, and Agrippa to mention a few others. I do not see statements anywhere that he tried to remain in prison to evangelize, but he was detained for other reasons. Events surrounding the two years of detention at the end of Acts are unclear which he spent after appealing to appear before Caesar. We don't know how long it took before he got to see Caesar and we don't know if there was further detainment after he did. The passage in Philippians 1 you referred to states he knew he was getting out by the time he wrote that letter.

The actual record in Acts explains that the Jews were trying to get Paul brought back to Jerusalem so they could kill him in transit, which Paul had become aware of. Most of the two years he spent there was during the rule of the governor, Felix, whom it is said kept him there hoping to get money from Paul (24:24-27). Then, near the end of that time Felix was desiring to cater to the Jews so Paul appealed to Caesar to protect himself (25:7-11). In the Philippians passage and in Acts it states that Paul wanted to make clear he was not a criminal but was in prison for the sake of Christ so that, in the end, Christ would be glorified. This along with getting away from the Jew's death wish for him are the two stated reasons he was in prison.

Your fourth point is correct in that Jesus' statements are directed nationally, but His teachings were consistently addressed to the Jewish Nation as they looked forward to their earthly Messianic Kingdom. Also, nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus ever instruct believing Jews to get involved in Roman government or try to change it. In contrast, we do see the **unbelieving Jews** in the Gospels and throughout Acts routinely try to use political clout they had gained with Roman officials to persecute believers and shun the teaching of Jesus, the twelve Apostles and Paul. The record shows they were clearly instrumental in swaying Pilate to have Jesus crucified. Furthermore, Paul does contradict Jesus' National directions as he states the key reason the Law of Moses was set aside was because it is inextricably connected with God's O.T. purpose for the Nation of Israel. Now, free from the Law, Jews and Gentiles are free to be unified in the spiritual Body of Christ (Eph. 2:11-18). Today, the Body of Christ makes up the totality of God's people, not the Nation of Israel. In the Epistles, this concept is repeated in many different terms and contexts - God's program is spiritual and has nothing to do with earthly nations. In fact, in the Body of Christ, it is stated "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male and female", we lose all our worldly labels so our identity will only be defined by our relationship in Christ (Gal. 3:27-28). In every passage within the Epistles, the indication is that today God sees all men in every nation as either believers or unbelievers, these two classifications period. In this dispensation, no earthly nation is titled God's people and there is no Scripture which gives an expectation that this is possible or would ever happen. For, only those in whom His Spirit dwells can be His people (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Your fifth point about slaves obtaining freedom if they are able is a good observation. However, again, it is important to define what a believer is able to do. Protesting, sit-ins, etc. for a believing slave was not acceptable behavior (Eph. 6:5-8; Titus 2:9-10). Christians, whether slave or free, were not to complain or be involved in disputes so all can be lights in this world (Phil. 2:14-16). We are to speak well about those persecuting us and not curse them (Rom. 12:14). We are to hang out with the lowly and resist the proud (v. 16). We are not to repay evil for evil (v. 17); not avenge ourselves (v. 19); and to overcome evil with good (v. 21). So, if a slave was able to negotiate freedom with their owner while pleasing the Lord by maintaining Christian character, this is what I believe Paul meant by the possibility of a slave gaining freedom.

When similar biblical behavior is applied to believers, we should strive not to slander people. Intentions in contrast with how Christians are to behave are a way of life in politics. In that arena, employing smear tactics and demeaning speech is the norm beginning with phrases such as 'sleepy Joe' and graduating to far worse defamation. However, when Christians seek to accomplish any task, we are to accomplish it free from fault in both word and action whether it be around believers or non-believers. When we fail to do this, we systematically destroy our own evangelistic thrust or effective edification within the Body which can only be accomplished by proper example. We are to be imitators of Christ's actions as depicted by the saved sinner, Paul. I could stress the need to maintain godly character in order to have effective ministry all day long! Believers should be always vigilant to change in mind and heart so we won't violate God's teaching for us – His children. Because when we ignorantly or purposely sidestep counsel from His Word, we will get carried away to compromise in order to obtain goals prompted by our flesh.

In reference to your closing comments, one need not wonder about humanistic motives many professed Christians have had historically in our country as well as in the present social climate. These actions speak for themselves. The main underlying reason for non-Christian motives and actions has always stemmed from a lack of knowing or understanding many portions in the Word. And, I believe we live in the most biblically illiterate generation among Christians since the Reformation. Second, believers too often follow tenets of the Law of Moses, which Paul aligns with acting in the flesh, not by the power of the Spirit. We are not under the Law today. Furthermore, your statement that God has used this country is completely relative, which is also true regarding the history of any other country during the past 2000 years of God's purpose involving the Church. Believers in America have done what they have done and each individual will stand before Jesus Christ to answer for their actions. Although, many have obeyed the Word in many ways, some of what these believers have done is not

in line with instructions given to the Church – the present day path to pleasing God.

At the same time, since the country's founding, unbelievers have done countless horrendous, immoral and pagan acts, which also comprises a large part of American history. This is the reality of this country's history and too many believers tend to ignore, deny or do not want to discuss this endless list of corruption. Yet, many Christians continue to align themselves with this country which includes identifying themselves with the ungodly actions of unbelievers, and we are clearly taught not to do this (2 Cor. 6:14-18). In addition, we are taught to not even align ourselves with godly believers (such as Paul, Apollos, or Cephas) or any earthly entity if we are to be spiritually united in the will of God. Instead, we are only to align ourselves with Christ Himself as our exclusive Head and with His spiritual Body, which is the Church (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:18-23). This is the only foundation that can prepare Christians to engage the world with a godly, unified front. To say otherwise displays a lack of understanding that the Spirit accomplishes God's purpose in His people.

Regarding your comment about good works, believers are told to practice these toward all men but especially toward believers (Gal. 6:10). Christians can obey these commands individually and/or in conjunction with other Body members in every way without aligning with unbelievers. Seeking to achieve this on a social basis hides or muddles the primary purpose for believers helping others which is a large part of our testimony for Christ. And, I believe the gifts gathered for the poor "saints" in Judea were only for believers, otherwise they wouldn't be called saints. Yes, many were Judaizers who still followed the Law of Moses though they believed Jesus was the Christ. So, still, the greater part of the professing Church today follows tenets of the Law of Moses! In reality, God alone knows those who are His. All we can do, with our limited human understanding, is to encourage those claiming faith to be accountable to the Word. Then, those who respond with obedience over time will be apparent as true believers.

I do want to close with a particular emphasis, but first know I believe a high percentage of statements made by Christians are formulated to support what they are presently involved with, in short, to defend themselves. Much of this rational does not align with the truth of grace we were given in the Word, but I have noticed this is common within the Church. And, when believers seek to defend their present social actions during 'Bible-study', this practice will always diminish actually discovering what God is saying to us in those contexts. The purpose of this self-justifying approach is similar to politicians' practice of spinning human events to support their interests. Please understand I do realize I cited specific passages from the Word to contradict numerous things you said, but I purposefully took this approach in the hope that it will challenge you to base

your convictions on actual Scripture. For, too many Christians base their beliefs and/or actions on broad 'concepts' from the Word which most often are partially or totally out of context and, therefore, lead them astray.

Overall, in our generation, I believe societal involvement is one of the primary practices that misdirect believers to go off on tangents from what we are instructed to do. If we would focus on what is happening in the Church, we wouldn't have so many brothers and sisters openly living in fornication, gossiping, slandering, accepting homosexuality and 'fleshing out' in so many ways. Recently I regretfully heard 1/4 of all abortions in the US involve women who attend churches. As I observe how churches in our area operate, I believe the average one is worse than the Corinthian church, which is rightfully acknowledged as the fleshliest assembly of believers referenced in the New Testament. Interestingly, those believers came out of a highly 'cultured' Greek society much like the one we live in. All of this, and much more, diverts believers from being involved with the things God wants us do in our lives, namely, to put off our old man and put on Christ's character (Rom. 13:11-14; Eph. 4:17-32). By tempting us to focus on how much better we are than unbelievers, trying to make them better, or endeavoring to improve the moral atmosphere we live in, I am convinced the devil has minimized the growth of many Christians and, thus, diminished our testimony in society. And, the ongoing moral decay of believers makes it all the more difficult to alter this trend.

Early believers, who lived in a culture that was at least as bad as ours, thrived morally because they spent their time being immersed in the Word and walking in the Spirit. If believers in this country focused on these same things today, we would be transformed into a publically undeniable force - the testimony of the power of God which changes lives. People would see Christ in us instead of just hearing condemnatory words or actions directed toward their conduct. The resultant impact would be great because this course is in line with what we are mandated to do, and the Spirit empowers obedience to the actions God has revealed in His Word for the Church.

May you keep growing in your life to impact others for our Lord!

Love, Chuck

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