

**THE RADICAL RABBI: "A RADICAL ELECTION"**  
**(Philippians 3:18b-21)**  
11.1.20

## INTRODUCTION

I have titled this message, "A Radical Election." I've also been informed that I am a finalist for the "Understatement Of The Year" award. Obviously for many of us, this is no ordinary week - as if there has been anything ordinary about 2020 anyway. But on Tuesday, the day after tomorrow, we are going to be voting for, among other things, President of the United States - arguably the single most important and powerful political office in the world. Now every election cycle seems to have that sense of: "This feels like it's been going on forever" and, with the constant assaults to our senses of campaign commercials and news coverage, and with more talking heads and "experts" than we could shake a stick at, this election has not disappointed.

But the Scriptures talk about another government, another kingdom, to which, if we are born-again believers, we have pledged our lives. And what we are meant to do for that kingdom has, in a sense, already been demonstrated by the campaigns we've been watching now for months. That's what we're going to be talking about this morning. But before we begin, **let's go to the Lord in prayer.**

Now a lot of what I'm going to be talking about, at least on the front end here, is based on what I've taken note of while watching the campaign of President Trump. So, before we go any farther, nothing I will be saying is intended to make any kind of editorial comments on him or his presidency, nor is it intended to be understood as any kind of endorsement. As a pastor, I don't do endorsements. Nor is it intended to place his campaign in any kind of negative light. What is intended is simply reflecting on what I have seen from his supporters at all levels of his campaign that has made me want to share some observations - so here goes.

The first thing that generally happens in any campaign is that a candidate announces him or herself and begins to put together a message - a collection of beliefs and ideas that are meant to shape what that candidacy is all about as they pursue the desired political office. And then, as that message gets out, we get what we call "supporters" - people who begin to come alongside the candidate.

What does that support look like? Usually a few things:

- 1) OK; first things first. It all starts with choosing a candidate, getting to know them and their positions, and then getting the sense of whether the things that are important to you are also important to them. But once a candidate has our support, we begin identifying with that candidate, and that can begin a whole process of things, such as ...
- 2) Identify with the candidate by displaying a yard sign. This lets people know there is a supporter at that house. But, of course, to know that, you have to somehow pass by that sign. So, to let more people know your support you ...
- 3) Identify with the candidate by wearing stuff that promotes that candidate's name and what he/she stands for. In this case, we've seen supporters of President Trump wearing hats and buttons, along with wearing shirts and flying flags, all to get his message out. But then there's still more; this year people have also chosen to ...

- 4) Identify with the candidate by having boat flotillas and caravans, all to get out the message about how great their candidate is. But then there's still more, as people have also chosen to ...
- 5) Identify with the candidate by donating money to the campaign, literally putting their money where their mouth is. And that's a whole lot of money; by the time Election Day rolls around, it is estimated that the presidential race will have spent a combined \$5.2 BILLION! And just in case you're curious, the U.S. House races (every seat) and U.S. Senate races (35 seats - 23 Republicans, 12 Democrats) will have spent an additional \$5.6 BILLION! That's a total of \$10.8 BILLION, folks! And then, one more thing; you can ...
- 6) Identify with the candidate by going to a rally, where a whole lot of like-minded people gather together to support each other and celebrate as they declare as a group to the candidate who comes to speak to them their unswerving loyalty and devotion to his/her candidacy - kinda like what we call "church." And then, finally, the last thing ...
- 7) Identify with the candidate by casting your vote for that candidate, showing your belief in that candidate by giving the most personal item you can give to any candidate - your voice.

In all these ways, candidates know that their message is getting out, and people are supporting their candidacy. But now let's look at our text to see another place, a better place, where we need to be placing these same kinds of efforts.

### TEXT & ANALYSIS

***[M]any live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body - Paul, Philippians 3:18b-21.***

Paul gives us a great picture of contrasts between nonbelievers and believers. He makes note of four things concerning nonbelievers:

- 1) Their outcome (destiny) of living as an enemy of the cross of Christ is destruction - an eternity of separation from God in hell.
- 2) Their "god" is essentially themselves - an ego-driven worship of the self, with its own passions and desires, with all energy focused on satisfying those things.
- 3) Their glory - their conceited passions and desires that blind them to all else except their personal pleasure. But no matter what that gives them in the moment, their "glory" will ultimately lead to their shame - that destiny of destruction.
- 4) Their mind - their vision for themselves and the meaning of life - is confined to earthly things because their worldview extends no farther than earthly things. Life beyond this life is not even considered.

But then Paul wondrously encapsulates the difference that believers have in one glorious phrase: ***[O]ur citizenship is in heaven!*** Notice that that phrase is written in the "present" tense. Why? Becoming a "citizen of heaven" is not something that we go into training for, or that needs to

wait until a certain level of maturity or experience in the Christian faith. The moment a person is born into new life in Christ, that person IS a citizen of heaven. And to make sure we can rest in that assurance; Paul wrote these incredible words to the church in Corinth: ***Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come - Paul, II Corinthians 1:21-22.*** And just to make sure that his point was made, Paul included the same idea in his letter to the Ephesian Christians as well, making sure they understood their citizenship in heaven was an immediate consequence of salvation: ***When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance... to the praise of His glory – Paul, Ephesians 1:13b-14.***

OK, then; so, if our citizenship is in fact in heaven, what should we do with that? What does that look like? Or, to quote from the title of one of Chuck Colson's books, "How Now Shall We Live?" Maybe a hint can be found by returning to Paul's list of how nonbelievers live, and changing it into how believers are to live as citizens of heaven:

- 1) We are no longer living as an enemy of the cross of Christ. Instead, we have surrendered to the salvation found in the blood of the cross of Christ. We are now children of God through Christ, with a destiny not of destruction but of life - eternal life with God in heaven.
- 2) We are no longer a "god" to ourselves. Instead, we worship Almighty God, the one true God, with all our focus on Him.
- 3) We are no longer living for our own conceited pleasure. We live for the glory of our God, which will bring eternal pleasure.
- 4) Our minds are transformed by a new, God-founded worldview, which sees this world through the filter of an eternity awaiting us beyond this brief life. Wow, what an eternity we have to look forward to!

So now what do we do? Well, God has a job for us; He wants us to each be an ambassador for Him. The dictionary defines an "ambassador" as: "An accredited diplomat sent by a country as its official representative to a foreign country, an official envoy of a government performing their duties as a resident representative in the foreign country to which they are assigned." Peter certainly understood that reality, referring to the audience of his first letter as ***foreigners and exiles - I Peter 2:11a.*** He understood that foreigners and exiles typically abstained from participating in the customs and practices of the host culture in which they lived, nor did they have the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. While being in the culture, they were not of the culture.

That definition works really well, especially when joined with the job description of an ambassador that Paul shared with us through his second letter to the Corinthian church: ***God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us - Paul, II Corinthians 5:19-20a.*** Now, as Christ's ambassadors, we have two main responsibilities:

Any ambassador will tell you that one of the most important things they do is to simply conduct their lives in such a way that the government they represent is seen in the best possible light,

making their nation and the leader they answer to as attractive as possible. It's the same thing for us as ambassadors for our leader - Jesus Christ. So our first responsibility is to reflect the light of Christ: ***"You are the light of the world A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven"*** - ***Jesus Christ, the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:14-16***. We want to, by how we live our lives, make the gospel, and the life found in Jesus Christ, as attractive as possible by reflecting, by our own lives, how amazing that life is.

So how do we do that? Christ Himself spoke to the essence of what being an ambassador would look like: ***"As I have loved you, so you must love one another"*** - ***Jesus Christ, John 13:34b***. Paul boiled it down so well in his letter to the Philippian church: ***Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus - Paul, Philippians 2:5 (NASB 1995)***. In fact, Paul took it even further in his letter to the Colossians: ***[W]hatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him - Paul, Colossians 3:17***. And how can we do this? Paul tells us that God in His love for us pours out His grace to us to make sure we can do this: ***[I]t is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure... so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life - Paul, Philippians 2:13, 15-16a (NASB 1995)***. He makes it so that we can live our lives for the benefit of Him!

Any ambassador would also tell you that, as another important thing, very simply put, you are not placed in that post to communicate your own words, but the words of your king. An ambassador is entrusted with being the voice of his leader in that place. So it is with us; as Christians, our second job responsibility is to proclaim the message of Christ. Christ's words at the end of the gospel of Mark fit so well here: ***"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation"*** - ***Jesus Christ, Mark 16:15***. In other words, we are willing to be sent anywhere for the sake of our king's message. And what is that life-giving, life-changing message? According to Paul's words to the Corinthians, it was that ***God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them***. I also like how Paul expressed that message of reconciliation to the Colossian church: ***[God] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins - Paul, Colossians 1:13-14***. So that's our job; that's what we're here for. Not once did I hear a word about campaigns. But I did hear an awful lot about Christ.

## APPLICATION

So, what's the bottom line in all this? How do we navigate the waters of our current political climate? It might do us some good to remember some really important Biblical truths as we head toward Election Day:

First, God is in charge. No campaign is going to accomplish something He doesn't want. Four

years ago, it pleased God to have Donald Trump elected president. I don't know that that's what God wants now - but I can tell you this: If when it is all said and done and the smoke has cleared and all that, if Joe Biden is declared the winner, then that will happen because God wants it to. No conspiracies, no tricks. Just God. Which means that, if that happens, it is God's desire as a furtherance of His plans for our nation and our world that Joe Biden become president, and Kamala Harris his vice-president (one heartbeat away) and Nancy Pelosi as speaker of the house (two heartbeats away).

You know, some of the oldest words in the entire Bible were spoken by Job, when he said this: **"[God] makes nations great, and destroys them; He enlarges nations, and disperses them" - Job, Job 12:23.** In the New Testament, when Paul was debating some philosophers in Athens (Acts 17), he said this to them: **"From one man [God] made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands" - Paul, Acts 17:26.** Short truth: History is HIS STORY- nothing more and nothing less.

Second, everything, and I mean everything, we see on planet earth is temporary! Folks, it ain't gonna last. Both testaments of Scripture make this incredibly clear:

- 1) According to David: ***[Mere mortals] are like a breath; their days are like a fleeting shadow - David, Psalm 144:4.***
- 2) According to the apostle James: ***What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes - James 4:14b.***

If that's how our 70-80-90 year-long lives are described, then what does that make a four-year presidential term? We need to keep our eyes on eternity and the things of eternity - the things that will last. Politics is NOT one of those things.

Third, the church is intended to reflect Christ to the world - not the affairs of this world. This election unfortunately has been allowed to become just one more way for the church to be divisive - and to show that off to the world. Folks, the church doesn't need more ways to come apart. We certainly don't need another way for the world to be less than impressed with us. And yet, in reports from all over the country, we hear that happening. In short, people who might not vote for Trump are not saying anything publicly because of the hostility they would receive from family and church. As one lady in Texas put it, if she loses her friends of 20 years over her not voting for Trump, she won't have any friends.

Folks, it's important beyond words that the world see the church as belonging to Someone not of this world. That's how Christ described His kingdom to Pilate - ***"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now My kingdom is from another place" - John 18:36.*** That's why John wrote in his first letter: ***Whoever claims to live in Him must live as Jesus did - I John 2:6.*** This election has simply reduced the church to being another voting block. Is that what we're here for? Is that the kingdom that interests Christ? He didn't die for a political party. He died to save sinners from their sins. That's the fact of Jesus Christ that needs to be proclaimed. Anything else simply diminishes Christ to something so painfully less than what he truly is.

## CONCLUSION

And maybe the most important point of all: There is so much talk about the dangers of the

so-called radical left, with terms like progressive and ANTIFA and all of that. And all we do is get worked up about them and think somewhat less than charitably about them.

What about changing them? Not at the point of a gun or a ballot box, but at the point of prayer. When was the last time we prayed for Joe Biden? Kamala Harris? Nancy Pelosi? Ilhan Omar? "AOC?" The Scriptures make one thing clear: In the name of God and Jesus Christ, we owe them the respect of their authority. As Paul said to the Roman church: ***Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves - Paul, Romans 13:1-2.*** That message never changed from the apostles to their readers, regardless of who it was who was in charge - and that includes Nero! Submission to their authority reflects our submission to God and His authority.

But if their policies, their beliefs, their ideologies, disturb us, then let's pray that God through His Holy Spirit would disturb them. That's why Christ came - to change people - "all things new." That's what we're here for, to make an impact for Christ. Can you imagine what a party heaven would throw if, for instance, an avowed Muslim surrendered to Jesus Christ? Why in the world wouldn't I want to pray for that?

That means two questions work their way to the top: (1) Do we want to work for the salvation of everybody - including people we disagree with with every fiber of our being, and (2) do we truly believe that "all things can become new?" It's moments like this that we show what we most truly believe.

Let's turn our attention to the eternity of our King. It is guaranteed going to happen. So many people have spent time and resources on "their" candidate. What about us - turning things we're already doing for a candidate into doing the same things for our King? How about "caravans for Christ" or "jalopies for Jesus." And think about this - what a king we have to promote and to follow: Somebody who provided a way to save me from my sins, allowing me to be seen by God as perfect as He is, somebody who provided a way for me to continually grow more and more into His image, somebody who keeps every promise He ever made, and somebody who has an eternal, forever life planned for me and for every other one of His "supporters?" Can any campaign you've ever heard of promise better than that? And no term limits, no campaigns ... and no commercials!

Christ died for the world - including every person currently in office in our country. If He died for them, He must certainly want their salvation. Are we willing to let go of our desires for the eternally greater good of God's desires? Who wins that vote? In these last hours, pray for your vote, that God would direct it as He would want. Pray for our nation, that this divisiveness could come to an end, and that we would all remember that we are called the "United States" of America. And let's pray that all of us would without hesitation identify and let the world know beyond a shadow of a doubt who it is we bow to. Let's pray!