

# Politically Stressed and Depressed Christians

John M. Buttrey II

Political discussions flow from *right* to *left* among Christians. On occasion, these discussions can become quite heated. As Christians living in the United States of America, we have genuine concerns about policies, programs, problems abroad, and problems here in America. Many Christians get fired up, disgusted, and politically frustrated as they view the course of our society and government. In their frustration, they begin a very different kind of preaching.

Chain emails are circulated among brethren, and sometimes are even posted on Facebook. No doubt you have received some of these chain emails. They generally contain some wild and outrageous claim about whoever may be the current president, or the U.S. government in general, and urge you to pass the email on to your friends. For example, an email was circulated earlier this year that claimed 2014 tax returns would be delayed until October 2015. The email had a lot of people upset and angry. Unfortunately, like most of these chain emails, it was a false news story!

Another false chain email, still circulating, shows a supposed student I.D. of Barack Obama at Columbia University, where he is listed as a foreign student. However, the picture of the card in the email has been shown to be a forgery! Barack Obama was not a foreign student.

These types of chain emails are very common. However, some of us just read them, get upset and send them to others who get upset, when a little bit of fact checking might reveal there is nothing to get upset about!

With today's technologies and social media sites, gossip and rumors can be spread with the click of a mouse. Spreading the lies and rumors contained in these chain emails, whether we want to admit it or not, is sinful (cf. Rom. 1:28ff).

Certainly there are very real concerns in the world: What will happen with the rise of ISIS? What about the moral degradation in our society? We see religious groups embracing same-sex marriages. We see political corruption. How far will Ebola spread in the United States? How should we *as Christians* respond to such real concerns?

There is nothing wrong with Christians wanting to make changes in the world by being involved politically. We can vote, run for office, organize petitions, or support a favorite candidate. However, let us remember there are also spiritual responses to our world's, or nation's problems.

I would like to suggest three positive ways we can all be involved as God's children. In fact, rather than responses we choose, they are each commands of God that we *must* do..

## 1. Pray

This may sound obvious enough, but let me ask, have you complained more than you have you prayed? Have you spent more time petitioning than praying? Why not make petition to God through prayer? Notice these inspired words of Paul to Timothy:

*"First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity."*

1 Timothy 2:1-2

If we would complain less, and pray more, about presidents, governors, senators, policies, and

so on, we would be using our time more effectively. Prayer can accomplish much more than chain emails with false information. Peter wrote:

*"Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."*

1 Peter 2:17

It is natural to be upset or angry about decisions we see being made. However, let us respond to such matters as Christians should respond. Jesus tells us to pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44). Paul wrote:

*"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*

Romans 12:21

We must always be guided in our words and actions by the instruction of Scripture, and not the often deceiving emotions of our heart.

## **2. Pay**

Nobody likes paying taxes, but taxes are what keep our local, state, and federal governments operating. Paul said:

*"For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."*

Romans 13:6-7

Jesus gave the same instruction:

*"And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him."*

Mark 12:17

Today, our taxes are sometimes used to pay for things that we as Christians find morally objectionable. However, neither Paul, nor Jesus, give us any tax exemptions. As citizens, we are responsible to pay. Those in government who decide how taxes are spent will give an account to God for their actions.

## **3. Obey**

As Christians, we are required to obey the laws of the land. Paul is very clear:

*"Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."*

*Romans 13:1-2*

The apostle Peter gives the same instruction:

*"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right."*

*1 Peter 2:13-14*

As Christians, we are told to submit to the ruling authorities. We do so to the point that they are not interfering with our service God. God is the ultimate authority, and we must obey Him over all other sources of authority (Acts 5:29).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

While there are things about this world that upset us, let us never forget that our time here is but a vapor. This is not our permanent home.

*"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."*

*Colossians 3:1-4*

If we really want to change our world for the good, how about more emails on the truth of the Gospel? If we are willing to knock on doors for a candidate, or a new law, how about being willing to knock on doors for Jesus Christ?

If we will remember to Pray, Pay, and Obey, we will save ourselves, and others, a lot of stress and frustration.