

## Our Nation Seemed to Ruin Doomed

Philip Doddridge (1702–1751)

Our nation seemed to ruin doomed,  
Just like a burning brand;  
Till snatched from fierce surrounding flames  
By God's indulgent hand.

“Once more,” He says, “I will suppress  
The wrath that sin would wake,  
Once more My patience shall attend,  
And call this nation back.”

But who this clemency reveres?  
Or feels this melting grace?  
Who stirs his languid spirit up  
To seek Thine awful face?

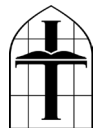
On days like these we pour our cries,  
And at Thy feet we mourn;  
Then rise to tempt Thy wrath again,  
And to our sins return.

Our nation far from God remains,  
Far, as in distant years;  
And that small remnant which is left,  
A dying aspect wears.

Now chastened, rescued thus in vain,  
Thy righteous Hand severe  
Into the flames might hurl us back,  
And quite consume us there.

Yet, 'midst the cry of sins like ours,  
Incline Thy gracious ear;  
And Thine own children's feeble cry  
With soft compassion hear.

O by Thy sacred Spirit's breath  
Ignite a holy flame;  
Refine the land that Thou has spared,  
And magnify Thy name.



*In the Nick of Time* is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

Permission is granted to duplicate for personal and church use.

www.centalseminary.edu | info@centralseminary.edu  
900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

October 25, 2024

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

## *In the Nick of Time*

### How to Vote 2024

Kevin T. Bauder

The church's place is not to address political questions. Rather, its work is to proclaim the whole counsel of God. Christian individuals, however, are responsible to act upon moral and spiritual concerns before they address merely temporal ones. Matters of principle should take precedence over matters of preference. Therefore, part of the church's responsibility is to instruct the people of God in every moral principle that applies to their political decisions. In other words, while churches should not tell their members *whom* to vote for, they should teach them *how* to vote.

Political contests raise many issues that are not directly moral. Christians can certainly weigh these issues, but non-moral concerns should never take priority over moral ones. For example, candidates' religious beliefs and affiliation do not usually determine how well they will govern. Christians might better vote for an unbeliever with just policies than to vote for a fellow saint whose policies are naïve or misguided.

Furthermore, governments have no moral responsibility to manage the economy, and when they try, the result is usually destructive. Governments have no moral duty to create jobs, to increase the wealth of their nations, or to supply the financial or medical needs of their citizens. Governments do not even have a moral duty to educate children.

Citizens may wish that their governments would do some of these things, but since they are not matters of conscience, they must not become the main issues that Christians consider when they are deciding which candidate to support. Rather, such issues must take a very distant second place to genuinely biblical and moral concerns. I here suggest ten biblical concerns that Christian people must weigh as they consider their voting choices.

*Right to Life.* From the time that government was established (probably Gen 9:6), its most important duty has been to protect the lives of the innocent. Civil authorities must use their power to defend those who are too weak to defend themselves. No one is more innocent than the unborn, who are clearly presented as human persons in Scripture (Psalm 51:5). Christians should reserve their votes for candidates who will work against the holocaust of abortion on demand.

*Rule of Law.* The clear teaching of the Bible is that law binds civil authorities. Any law that contradicts God's law is, of course, unjust (Acts 5:29). More than that, rulers are bound by the law of the land that they rule (Ezra 5:13; 6:1-7; Acts 16:36-38). In the United States, the Constitution is the highest law of the land. But a Constitution that can mean whatever five justices want it to mean is exactly the same as no Constitution at all. Christians should support candidates who will only appoint or confirm judges who will abide by the meaning of the Constitution itself.

*Restraint of Evil.* A key function of government is to restrain evil (Rom 13:3-4). Externally, this means that the government must maintain a strong defense against national enemies and control the country's borders against intrusion. Internally, it means governments must maintain the peace through effective policing. They must also enforce retributive justice against criminals through a just judiciary, remembering that "lawfare" is an attack upon the rule of law itself.

*Respect for Property.* The right to private property is protected by God (Exod 20:15). Few rights are more critical than this one. Great wealth rightfully gained is not a wrong but a blessing. Governments act immorally when they disintegrate the accumulation of wealth, whether through confiscation or through "progressive" taxes on income, estates, and capital. Christians should support candidates who refuse to make the government an expression of envy and an agent of economic redistribution.

*Recovery of Moral Responsibility.* God makes able-bodied people responsible for their own welfare (2 Thess 3:10). He has mandated that we should live by working. He expects mature people of every station to earn their living and to prepare for times when they cannot. For those who are overcome by circumstances beyond their control, God has ordained institutions such as family and church as agencies of support. Such institutions can provide help while holding individuals accountable. Casting government in the role of provider inevitably uncouples assistance from accountability and is deeply immoral. It is especially dangerous when the government's activity supersedes the role of the family and negates its responsibility.

*Recognition of Israel.* God has not canceled His blessing for those who bless Israel, nor His curse for those who do not (Gen 12:3). While the modern state of Israel is not equivalent to the biblical Israel, it is related. Christian respect for and friendship to Jewish people ought to include support for the existence, autonomy, and liberty of Israel.

*Responsible Use of Nature.* God has given humans dominion over nature (Gen 1:26-28). Pristine preservation of nature is not God's intention. We must recognize that the earth has been created for human use. Contemporary "environmentalism" often thwarts this divine design, and it must not be advanced by governmental regulation or policy.

*Reputation for Integrity.* When the wicked rule, the people mourn (Prov 29:2). The personal character of political candidates affects their ability to serve in office. A candidate whose word cannot be trusted is one who cannot govern well. Integrity is particularly important when it comes to a candidate's sworn word. A candidate who violates the marriage oath is the kind of person who will violate an oath of office. Yet a candidate who has erred in the past may show a change of heart by consistent promise-keeping in the present.

*Rightness of Personal Defense.* God forbids murder (Exod 20:13), and no one must submit to being murdered. Furthermore, God assigns a duty to deliver those who are about to be murdered (Prov 24:11-12). The right to personal defense is given by God. Governments have no authority to deprive citizens either of this right or of the necessary means of exercising it. Christians should support candidates who will not limit access to the means of personal defense.

*Reality of Marriage, Sex, and Gender.* There are only two natural sexes, and only two natural genders that are inextricably linked to them (Gen 1:27). Natural marriage always involves a union of one partner from each sex (Gen 2:24). Legal requirements to recognize other arrangements are not only contradictory and wicked, but tyrannical. Christians must support candidates who will not undermine these realities.

The last three election cycles have failed to give Christians any presidential candidate who meets all these criteria, and candidates for other offices are usually not much better. Even so, some candidates are worse than others. Given that government is ordained by God for good (Rom 13:4), Christians faced with imperfect choices should choose the greater good. They should make their choice, at minimum, by the criteria that I have listed above.

They must also resist being driven by material concerns. Their primary interests are not economic. Their duty is to seek first the kingdom of God. Biblical principles should take priority over personal preferences at the polls, just as they should in every area of life.



---

This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

---