
VISION FORWARD



WHAT WILL THE RIGHTEOUS DO

by Elder Mike Dahar

“From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates;¹⁷ Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon.” (Nehemiah 4:16-17)

Essential foundations: Ps. 11:3

God so loved the world He gave us Christ and His word.

This rebuilding of the walls of the Temple in the time of Nehemiah reminds us of the timeless struggle between good and evil. The Temple represented the very life of the nation, and the walls of protection were necessary. Likewise, in Psalm 11 we are asked this profound and insightful question: “What will the righteous do if the foundations are destroyed”? Today there are many God-given “foundations” being undermined by the philosophies of man. There are many reasons for this decay. Most concerning, however, is the continual encroach of the State on the rights and responsibilities of the Church and Family.

These three spheres of authority—Church, State, and family—these “foundations” are designed by God for the welfare of humanity. Each have been given specific responsibilities and all need to be respectful of each other. The government’s main purpose is to restrict evil and promote peace. The Church, as God’s representative on earth, it to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and to live it out in all aspects of life. The family is designed to nurture and to train in all that is good according to the character and wisdom of God, passing it down from one generation to the next. These spheres of

authority are foundational to the reality God has laid out in His Word. And all are called to honor God in their respected tasks.

The State and God: Ps 2 & Acts 4

Church/State separation - yes. The separation of powers does not give the State the right to promote evil in the sight of God. Separation does not mean the promotion and/or enforcement of either atheism where God is no longer acknowledged or any one state religion. Nor does separation mean the State can control faith-based speech. It means the very opposite. The first amendment was provided to protect such speech.

In a pluralistic society, individual faith and rights are to be respected and accommodated. This is not happening today. Parental rights need to be respected. Current State-initiated school policies make no room for issues of conscience nor faith-based convictions. Children should not be suspended for sexual harassment because they believe that there are only two genders.

Pluralism has become a policy of intolerance or better known as “cancel culture”. Our current Governor has stated publicly that God is pleased with her anti-life stance and policies. Our family care centers are often under legal threats. Should we accept this? Is the God of life pleased with death? She is also on record as saying those who will not support gender fluidity need to leave New York State. This is hardly a pluralistic society by definition. Do we agree with her?

No doubt we need a reformation of our government. A government that honors God, human life, and individual faith and conscience. The ancient boundary set by God specific to the Family, Church and State itself must be restored. History teaches us that if the state grants rights, then the state can remove the same. Yet, if they are granted by God, then they must be retained always. This is the critical nature of Rule of Law and living under a constitution.

Religious freedom and the rights of individuals: 1Cor. 10.31

As to religious freedoms, we have cake makers, florists, printers, graphic designers and film makers all in court because they are Christians. They simply will not use their God-given talents to support/promote what is against their conscience to do so. Their desires to honor God with their talents is being “legally” suppressed. The courts are attempting to force people of conscience and conviction to do and say things they fundamentally disagree with.

This why our Bill of Rights and Constitution are such a gift from God. These provide a framework for both the individual and nation to progress and thrive. They allow for diversity of thought and expression. As Christians, we believe in accommodation, but not coercion. Oppression will never achieve a peaceful or just society. We must move away from the cancel culture mentality.

What about medical mandates? Tough issue for many. Currently there are religious exemptions, but these are subjectively awarded or acknowledged. Our current state government was pushing for isolation camps that would strip the individual of any due process rights (10 NYCRR 2.13 regulation; visit unitingnys.com/lawsuit/) for more information. Policies such as these will never achieve a peaceful society in the long run.

Coercion and intimidation are not honoring to God and policies that promote such things are not consistent with God’s means or methods. They are not even the trademarks of a republic.

Parents and children: Duet. 6.4-9

We have parents in courts over identity and health related issues pertaining to their children. From extreme medical mandates, LGBTQ related gender policies, and extreme race narratives (CRT), the children are in the crosshairs. Parental rights were once accommodated by State-driven school policies. This is no longer the case.

One of the more ironic and insightful stories of the day is as follows. Consider Chloe Cole who testified at an Assembly Committee hearing on Senate Bill 107 in Sacramento, CA. This bill promotes policies that overtly protect transgenderism as a standard of care. She was surgically transgender by 15 and now believes the adults in her life failed her during her confusing years. Her example of courage to testify before lawmakers was resisted by those promoting transgenderism.

She notes her parents followed the advice of school staff and medical professionals. They affirmed her “transitioning” to them. She adds, “It kind of felt like propaganda – the words they use like ‘gender-affirming care’ and things of that sort.” Chloe who is 18 now says, “I can’t breast feed my children in the future.” She speaks out because, “they’re starting to operate in preteens now” and she realizes, “I was sold a product”. Historically as California goes, so do the other states, especially New York State.

The righteous and our call to action: James 2.18-20

We often talk of going to heaven. But Christ is returning to earth first. And He wonders if He will find faith upon His return (Lk 18.8). What does He mean by this? He first means, will he find in an unbelieving heart faith in Him as Savior? Because Jesus loves the world, He died for the world, that any and all who believe or put their faith in Him might not perish but have everlasting life. But, also, perhaps a secondary sense in which Jesus will seek faith in the earth is in our life’s testimony of faith in Him—the faith, trust, and obedience of the church. Will Jesus evaluate how we took care of the earth? How are we stewarding the resources and every good and perfect gift that comes from Him? How we were salt and light in both word and deed? Will there be evidence? The fruit of a Spirit-filled and led life?

⁵ This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth (1 John 1:5-6)

In all our dealings we are to honor Christ. We love the things He loves and hates the things He hates. We hate no one, but must stand against teachings or policies which promote death, destroy the lives of children and/or undermine God’s foundations as shared above. Our love for Christ should influence how we vote, in addition to our prayers and acts of service. Since we are not of this world, and are not to love the things in this world, our alignment is easy. Our loyalties are to Christ, His character, His kingdom.

We must renounce evil and take captive every thought that raises itself up against the knowledge of Christ. This includes the emotions that are often tied to thoughts. Our love for God must override even our feelings. As a free people, we can call for change of direction through voting. This simple civil duty, a privilege some nations do not enjoy, needs to be utilized by Christians.

Many in the faith/church do not vote. Yet, voting is a much better way than having to carry a shield or spear around as in the days of Nehemiah. Our nation needs to hear the voice of God’s people in many ways, and this one can help protect our decaying foundations.

Repentance, faith and a healed land: 2 Chronicles 7.14

His people, (the righteous) who are called by His name, need to become salt and light at this time and resist those who would confuse, distort, or defy heaven’s will. If the nation is turned from evil, through the repentance of God’s people, the preaching of the gospel, the lost being found—through a mighty move of God!—could this and should this not include the simple task of voting?

Our land needs real healing, and honoring God is the starting point of this process. We need to trust God’s will over our preferences. We are privileged to live in a free nation. Are we as believers not called for such a time as this?

10 THINGS TO REMEMBER BEFORE AND AFTER YOU VOTE

by Pastor Jonathan Evans

1. Jesus is King - all authority in heaven and earth belong to him. All earthly rulers have been entrusted with an authority from on high, one for which they will give an account as stewards to the Master.

2. Jesus is Savior - there are no “be all” and “end all” political saviors. No singular political figure (or movement) will save the world and usher in God’s final kingdom, a brand new heaven and earth. That honor and power belongs to Christ alone.
3. Jesus is Lord - all final loyalty belongs to Jesus, not a candidate or political party. When love becomes a god — any love, even love for country - it becomes a demon.
4. Jesus is an all-consuming fire - politics should never become an all-consuming endeavor. Putting all your hope and joy into the next vote or next president is bound to leave you hopeless and joyless when things don’t go your way. Jesus alone is worthy to be loved with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.
5. Politics is not everything - What happens in Washington D.C. or Albany, New York has serious implications but it is not everything. What matters most as Christians is what happens in our churches: are we worshipping Jesus? following and walking in obedience to Him? seeking Him and listening to His Word? gathering together and building each other up in our faith? confessing our sins to one another and bearing fruit through repentance? serving and praying for each other? operating in the fruit of the Spirit and being conformed into the image of Jesus?
6. Every earthly government, kingdom, movement, and political leader will cease to exist in the end - only Jesus will never be moved and only His kingdom will never be shaken.
7. Our vote is a vehicle or means through which we bring our faith to bear on our communities, to shine as light and to preserve as salt. But, again, it’s just that: a temporal means, not the final solution.
8. Our vote should not divide us from one another as Christians - an unhealthy religious fervor begins to view the other side as the sum and total of their vote. There’s no room for disagreement, difference, forgiveness, forbearance, listening, or learning. They are the enemy.
9. Since God has determined the boundaries of our dwelling, the opportunity to vote is something we should give thanks for, and like all gifts from His hand, we should receive it, not reject or ignore it. We will give an account for how we stewarded that gift.
10. Whether in victory or defeat, remember that nothing happens that is outside of His control and His purposes - whether His purpose for our lives, or Elim Grace, or the United States, or the world, or all of creation. All at once, Jesus is the Beginning and the End.

ON MARRIAGE: WHO MAKES THE DECISION?

by Pastor Jonathan Evans

In marriage, what happens when you can’t decide together or come to an agreement on what to do? You trust the decision of the one who is strong in that particular area.

Neither the husband nor the wife are going to be strong in every way nor in every area of life. One will have certain strengths, while the other will have certain weaknesses. And vice versa.

As one example, at the beginning of our marriage I was not very good with stewarding our money and sticking to a plan and budget. Alissa, though, was and is exceptional at it. So if there’s ever a discussion on money, planning, and budgeting and a decision needs to be made, I will trust her decision, because it’s an area of strength for her.

And, of course, there are areas in which she trusts me to make the decision. Neither one of us, though, is threatened or diminished by the other making a decision, because the decision is never made in a vacuum or in the dark without the other’s knowledge or input.

Within this context, the authority and ability to make every decision in a marriage in every area of life does not belong solely to the husband nor the wife. It's a shared responsibility. Yes, it's possible that one could care less or abdicate that shared responsibility and as a result one person has to make every decision. But that's not the way it should be, and that's not the way a marriage thrives. A husband and a wife thrive together by complementing one another as each exercise their God-given abilities and strengths in service of the other.

So what are your strengths? Where are you competent?

What are the strengths of your spouse? Where are they competent? Do you value and treasure their strengths? Can you trust them to make a decision? Can you follow them in that decision? In the end, "who makes the decision" is less about having authority over one another and more about having trust in one another, a trust rooted in the joy of serving and laying down your life for each other.