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Faithful Presence in a Politically Charged World

1 Peter 2: 9-17

Pastor Mark Kremer

Next Sunday is the 4th of July. We celebrate our nation's birthday and in Lincoln we do it in a very explosive way! You know I've lived in this town for eight years now and we do love our fireworks. I've often thought I was in a war zone on the 4th of July—*the bombs bursting in air, the rockets' red glare* is no lie in this town. I've seen grown men, dignified men, people who have positions in this community, become raving maniacs as soon as the punk gets lit. I mean this place explodes! So watch out, firemen; get ready; it's going to be another barn burner next week. But you know, we need to probably think a little bit more deeply about what the 4th of July's all about—a celebration of our country, its birth—and I think, in these particular days, the political environment we live in is pretty explosive in and of itself. And a lot of Christians are asking the question, "How do we engage in our culture—in the political arena, in the public arena—how are we suppose to engage? How are we supposed to live in this kind of a world, in this kind of environment?" And since I'm not preaching next Sunday on the 4th of July, we're going to talk about that today.

Now through the centuries and the millennia there are probably four primary responses that the church has had to the culture, the political environment that it is living in and engaged in. One of those responses has been *withdrawal from the culture*. Sort of an all politics and public life, all of the culture is dirty and tainted, and therefore we withdraw; we build a fortress; we remove ourselves from that and we kind of live in isolation. I think there are serious theological problems with that particular view and it doesn't follow the mandate that God has given to us at all.

The second response is what I would call *hostile engagement*. Sometimes even subversive, I mean it's sort of like the philosophy would be, "Hey, two can play this game. You want to be rough and play dirty? We can play dirty too." We get in the fray and we mix it up and we pull out all of the stops of all the tricks that everybody else in the world uses and, man, we go at it tooth-and-nail, put the gloves on; let's have a knock-down drag-out and I think there's some serious theological problems with that view as well.

A third, which also has a problem, is the view of *accommodations*—simply assimilating into the culture. As the culture changes and the morals change around us, the church simply adjusts its theology so that it fits in so that it just kind of goes with the flow and it really doesn't even have a distinct message. We talked about that some—Bryan did—when we were going through the *Seven Churches of Revelation*…that sort of the dead church; there's nothing there to say. And that's obviously not an option either.

The fourth option that I would like us to think about and consider—what I think the Bible clearly teaches—is what I would call, in the words of James Hunter, the author, *a faithful presence*. God has called us to have a *faithful presence* in the culture in every single arena of life including the political arena, the public arena, and that's what I want us to think about and consider this morning. To do that, I want to look at one of the primary passages in the New Testament where they talk about our response to the culture and the political realm especially. And so if you have your Bible, turn with me to 1 Peter, Chapter 2.

Now this letter that Peter wrote was written to a whole group of churches in the Roman Empire and under circumstances of severe oppression, persecution and suffering. This church was being *taken to the cleaners* by the culture, by the authorities. This was during the time of Nero, one of the most notorious of dictators the world has known and the Christians were paying a very heavy price. And part of the struggle they were having is, *"What do we do in these circumstances?"* Now I want us to be careful that I was not in any way drawing a parallel between what these churches were experiencing and what we experience today. We have unparalleled freedom and opportunity in our system of government to worship God and to serve God and be about His mission. As a matter-of-fact, if you gave in the offering this morning, you are in a country where your government lowers your taxes if you give to the Kingdom of God. Now that's a pretty supportive environment but even in the middle of that, there are challenges and we need to figure out what to do with them. Peter writes specifically to help these people understand how they should respond, how they should engage with the culture—with the political environment that they were in. I think there's sort of a manifesto here: principles for our engagement with the world in all of the different spheres. We're going to pick it up in verse 9 of chapter 2. This section, I think, really is sort of the thesis of this letter—that it really is kind of the high point. Many of these thoughts and these verses are repeated in multiple other places through the letter, but this is sort of the main point of his argument. We're going to start in verse 9.

> **But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.**
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> (*NASB, 1 Peter, 2:9-10)

Peter begins this section by helping them realize their true identity. It's very important when you go out to engage the world—when you leave the nest—that you understand who you are and where you've come from and what your mission is as you go out. Peter makes it very clear that those who are in Christ, those who have their faith and hope in Christ are **...a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession**, that we're a part of His Kingdom, that He has called us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light—an eternal kingdom. And He's the king and we're in His kingdom. We're His prized people; we're part of the royal family; we're the royal members of the king's family. That's our identity. But we were not always that, were we? He said **...once we were not a people; once we had not received mercy.** We were—apart from God's choosing us, God's saving us, God's reaching out with His amazing grace and bringing us to Himself—we were like everybody else in the culture that's apart from Christ. We were alienated from God; we were strangers from God; we were without hope and without God in the world. It was not through our personal merit or through a birthright or through purchasing this new kingdom identity that we have. It came about, simply and only, by the mercy and grace of God. That's who we are. We are a new people. We are identified with this new king and with this new eternal, everlasting kingdom—a kingdom that's not yet realized here on this earth, but it's nonetheless a very real kingdom—and we're a part of it. We're part of the royal family!

Now it's very important as we go out, that we understand that because it's the foundation of how we engage the world—that we go out not insecure, not unsure of ourselves, but very clear that we don't have to try to earn the favor and approval of men. We have God's favor; we're in His family and that's the foundation stone of our going out. But it's also important that we never forget that we're only experiencing that because of God's mercy and grace to us. So when we go out to engage the

culture, other people of other political beliefs, people of other cultures, people who have different beliefs, different lifestyles, it's important for us to remember that we, apart from Christ, are no different than anybody else in the culture. We don't come with an air of superiority or that we are somehow better than anybody else because we are no different than anybody else—sinners, misfits, and losers except for the saving work of God in Jesus Christ on the cross. But that is a new identity for us and one that has a sense of mission and He gives us that mission here. It's a very positive message that we're sent out into the culture to proclaim. In the middle of verse 9, so **...that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light**. In other words, wherever we go out into the culture, our mission is to proclaim this very positive message of the virtues and wonders of our King and His kingdom. It is to proclaim the wonders of Jesus and His amazing work on our behalf. We are to advertise—be a living, breathing advertisement—for this King and His kingdom, His work. That's our mission, no matter where we go. And so the implication is clearly we have to, in order to advertise, in order to proclaim *the excellencies of our King*, we have to go out. We have to be involved with; we have to mingle with; we have to be engaged with the culture—in every single sphere of that culture. That's our mission and our mandate. So we have our identity, which is very important, that we understand who we are. We have our mission or mandate. Now what else do we need to do if we're going to be a faithful presence?

Verse 11:

> **Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.**

He reminds us again that we are **...aliens and strangers** to this world now. Once we were aliens and strangers to God but now, by God's work, we're brought near and are part of His family. Now we're alienated from the culture; it feels strange. The more we're engaged with Jesus, the more we take on the kingdom values. The more His life becomes our life, the more alienated and distant and strange the culture and the world seems. We're different than the people around us. Have you ever been in a foreign place? Have you ever been an alien or a stranger somewhere? I mean you have that sense that everybody's looking at you; everybody's evaluating you; you're odd; you're different and they're trying to size up all other people like you, by you. I have that sense every time I go to India as people kind of watch you and look at you and they're evaluating you and they're not only trying to figure out who I am and what I'm about and how I'm going to behave and how I'm going to treat people, but they're going to make a judgment on all other Americans or all other people that are like me, based on how I respond, how I act, how I live. And I think that's exactly as we go out. We're aliens and strangers; we're different than, and there are certain prejudices that exist out there in the culture about who we are. But one of the most important things he says, as we go out to engage, is that we **...abstain from fleshly lusts that wage war against our true identity**. In other words we have to hate sin in our life. We need to work very hard to abstain from those things that are wrong. Now, again, Christians have often been known to point out all of the sin and moral failure of the culture. Sometimes we're very quick. We see it; we point it out; we make a big deal out of it and sometimes we've ignored and neglected to face our own stuff. That desperately needs to change if we're going to have a viable presence, a *faithful presence* in the culture. When we read that—**abstain from fleshly lusts**—we immediately think of sexual immorality and of course that's a huge issue. In fact while evangelicals oftentimes have railed against immorality, the very people doing the railing were practicing immorality. There's no credibility to our message. It's no way to engage the culture.

But there are other things that we don't have on the list of really bad sins that are very, very destructive. Notice the ones that these churches were struggling with in Chapter 2, Verse 1, because Peter specifically says, *"You need to deal with these things*." He says **...putting aside all malice, deceit, hypocrisy—**uh-oh—**envy and all slander.** You see those are sins; those are offensive to God; those are not kingdom values; that's not the character of our King and we have to deal with all of our things so we can rant about *these* sins. But if we practice these sins the world looks and says, *"You're no different, absolutely no different, just another movement within the world, another that comes and goes, another whose message doesn't ring true."* If there's going to be authenticity, then there has to be holiness and that would include things like **slander**. I don't think a lot of Christians think slander is even a sin, at least according to the way we live, because we slander people all the time. We slander government authorities. We make fun of; we mock. We struggle with materialism. We've assimilated into the culture in some of the most profound ways. While we rail against these things, we've just allowed the culture to completely influence us in others. So our first look—in order to be engaged in the culture—is a look within, to be holy ourselves, to deal with sin in our own life so we have a viable witness in the world in which we engage. What else?

Verse 12.

> **Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.**

That word **excellent** there means *noble*. In other words, he's saying, *"Be noble*." There should be a nobility to our lives. We should be noble people in the world—that is people who are seeking the good, the welfare of others. We are to be people who are doing **good**. We're seeking to live out this new kingdom's value system in the world by solving problems, by meeting needs, by seeking to elevate life for everyone, showing that we actually care about people and it shows in the things that we do and the way we try to make society and our world and our culture a better place. Many, many people in our congregation are engaged in those kinds of activities and that's not perhaps even primarily a political activity. It's just being involved in a public way in trying to make our city, our community, our state, our nation a better place—solving problems, meeting needs. The church, down through the centuries, has had its strongest witness when, along with its sharing of the gospel, has been doing the good works of the kingdom—feeding the poor, caring for the orphan and the widow, elevating people, giving opportunity, helping people get a taste of the kingdom value system, the eternal kingdom that really is right and just and good.

I love many of the things people here are involved in, but one of the things I think about is a guy in India by the name of Raja who is a taxi driver and he became a Christian. And as he drove around the city picking up people, he saw these abandoned people on the street, people who were sick, mentally ill, people that were just kicked out of their families and homes because they brought a bad reputation on their family—bad karma on their family. So they would just move the ill person or the sick person out onto the street and leave them to die. And Raja, as a Christian, began to pick those people up and bring them into his house and clean their wounds and care for them and night after night and day after day, he'd bring people in. It has basically grown into a thing called the Home of Hope, in Bangalore. Hundreds and hundreds of people have been brought there to be cared for and loved and their wounds cleaned, and many have died there, being cared for and coming to know Jesus. One of the interesting things is that Raja has made such an impression that even the government authorities have begun to recognize and honor him for his work. He's opened the door for Christians, for the culture to say, *"Wow, these people and their message is very different than*

our culture." It was his good deeds, his noble acts, that allowed that to happen and it opened a door for the gospel. He said that we are to be a noble people; we're to go out into the culture and engage in the culture, not just opposing bad things, but proposing solutions, offering alternatives, seeking to resolve the issues and challenges that face a city, a culture, a nation. The people of God can be fully engaged in trying to make this world a better place. He says that's exactly what we need to do, how we need to engage the culture with our good works. What else?

Verse 13:

> **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. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.** (Vs. 13-15)

Again, he points out the fact that the way we respond to governing authority will silence a lot of the criticism that people would have of the kingdom and its values, of God's people, because of the way we respond. And how are we to respond? He says we're to **submit**. We're to submit; we're to be humbly and orderly submissive to the governing authorities. This word here **...to every human institution...** it says here in the NASB but it really means *every human creation*. In other words it wasn't just a statement for these people and the fact that they had a king, but for anyone, any Christian in any time who's living in whatever form of government has been there, that Christians are called to live in submission to that government. We're to be a part of it; we're to be orderly; we're not to be subversive. We're not to be rabble-rousers and rebellious people. We're not to fight against those government authorities but, to whatever degree we can, unless we're being directed to immediately disobey God ourselves, we're to be submissive to those authorities because they are there to punish wrongdoing and to praise what is good. That's one of the primary functions of government, as God ordained it. Now we are fortunate that, living in America, we actually get to submit to a system of government that allows us, that actually calls us to be a part of shaping the laws that we live in, in shaping the culture, in shaping the laws that guide the land and the policies of the nation's government and the state's government. So, in our case, to submit to the government means to get involved in it because we don't have a king. We are the kings; we are the government; our voice matters. We have been invited by our system of government into the process of shaping the policies and laws that guide our nation and our state and our community. And so, for us, as believers, in this culture, to submit means to be involved, to take full advantage of the opportunity that's been given us to engage. But, again, to always do it in the right way, with a humility and a submission to whatever comes out of it because, again, we're not in the majority. Many of the laws will not be things that we would necessarily want, but we are called to live in submission under the authority that is there in place.

Verse 16, he says:

> **Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.**

In other words, the argument could be made that we are free from governmental authority because we are a part of this new kingdom, this eternal kingdom. We're God's people. We don't have to listen and obey these things. We have a higher king, a higher authority and that is absolutely true. But God has said, for His sake, that we are to use our freedom that we have to be a **...bondslave of Him** and do **good**. That would include all of the things we've talked about: to be holy, to do good

works, to seek the betterment of other people, to live in submission to governing authorities, to use our freedom for good—not for selfish purposes, not for sinful purposes. Again, one of the things that happened occasionally, down through history, is that Christians have tried to use their freedom to try to bring about the kingdom of heaven on earth by their own human means, and it's always been a mistake. Bryan talked about that and he related it to the *Seven Churches of Revelation*, how dangerous it is for a church to try to get in bed with the government—in other words to try to use the government to Christianize people. Because government is coercive and the gospel is not coercive, it's an offer from God; it comes as a choice of people. You can't force it on people and have it be legitimately Christianity. So we're not to use our freedom to do evil but to do good, to live out the gospel, to live out the realities of our King and this new kingdom in our daily life and our holiness and our nobility and our humility and submission.

And finally, verse 17:

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

That word **honor** means to respect or to treat with dignity and it couldn't be more simple or more clear. We are to respect all men, all people. We are to respect the king. Now, again, you must hear this in the context that these Christians would have heard it. Imagine Nero and his governors and those authorities being the ones in place and Peter is saying, with God's full inspiration, *"Honor, respect the authority that's over you and show respect for all people*." That respect is based on what we know to be true—that all men are created in the image of God and they have infinite value and worth because God created them—they are image-bearers of Him and so we treat them as such. They are of value to God; they are of value to us. And we would treat them, no matter their political persuasion, no matter their lifestyle, no matter who they are or what they are, they should be respected as individuals and treated with honor, just as we would want them, though they do not understand us, though they do not own and understand the kingdom values that we live and believe in, we would want them to respect and honor us. But even if they don't, precisely because we are of God's kingdom and we use His value system, we would still honor and respect other people around us. That's a real challenge, I think, for many Christians, because sometimes the louder the noise about all of the things that are happening in the political realm, the more worked up we get. And there are a million voices just trying to work us up...work us up...work us up! You can listen to it all day long, every day on the radio, you know, just firing you up...firing you up...firing you up until you're just seething with anger and we do wrong. We must obey God; we're His bondservants. We must be respectful and show honor. We're to render to Caesar what is Caesar's; we're to render to the government what is the government's and all men are owed and deserve respect. Not only that, he says we are to **...love the brotherhood**. That is we're to love the people of God that are part of God's family and that is a part of our witness to the world, because as the world watches and sees us and hears us proclaim about how great our King is, about how great Jesus is, about this amazing new kingdom that He will establish someday, and as we invite people in, they're saying, *"Hey, what's it really like inside that kingdom?"* And how we care for and love one another and serve one another and encourage one another, how we treat one another within the body, within the family of God, is a huge part of our witness to those who are outside. Because, if we genuinely love each other, as Jesus said, "All men will know you are my disciples when you love one another." That speaks volumes to the world. There's no place in our culture where people get loved and treated like that. I want to be a part of that. **Love the brotherhood...** is part of our way of engaging the world. And then he says **...fear God**. Now we have a tendency to fear God, fear the King, or be in awe and then show undue honor sometimes to people and sort of lower God down and just maybe we'll respect God, but we don't really stand in awe or fear of God. God is God alone. We should

have our greatest fear, our greatest respect, our greatest honor; the greatest sense of awe is reserved for Jesus and the Father and Spirit only. We can respect men but we fear God. We don't need to fear people, nor do we want to elevate people beyond where they should be elevated. There's no human being that's ever going to be the Savior. No person's going to come on a horse like a shining knight and save us out of our malaise and problems; there's no human that's going to do that. Only God can do that. So we should not have undue awe of any man. All honor and worship and praise belong to God, but respect for every man. Now I think that's the very essence of *faithful presence*. I think it's understanding who we are and what we're called to be about, that we were once like everyone else in the culture, but we engage them as people who have experienced the extraordinary grace and mercy of God and we proclaim and advertise the worthiness, the extraordinary virtues of Jesus. We do that with our own holiness, making sure that we are different than the culture around us, that we abstain from those things that are destructive to our new identity and disobedient to God. We do it through our nobility, that we take the initiative to do good, to try to make the world a better place, to offer solutions, not just opposition. We are faithfully present by submitting to the governing authorities, by being orderly in the way we do, by fully expressing ourselves in the right way, within the government's system that we have, and we do it by showing honor and respect for all people, whether they agree with us or disagree with us. They deserve our respect because they're made in the image of God. With faithful presence in every sphere of our culture, in the public arena, as well as within the church, we have an opportunity to step into our culture and into our world in every arena and live out this value system, to be a faithful presence for Christ in our culture and our society and just leave the results of that in God's hands. Some are called to actually get involved in the political realm and, when they're authentic Christians who live in that realm and serve in that realm, they really can make a profound difference because it's very noticeable how different they are from the way everybody else operates within that rather cut-throat sort of environment.
I'd like you to just take a look at the story or the testimony of three current and former state senators here in Lincoln, who seek to be a faithful presence for Christ in our own state government and listen to them as they talk about how they try to live their faith and be a faithful presence in that environment.

Video:

Well, I'm Tom Carlson, State Senator for District 38 in Nebraska. I'm one of forty-nine senators. I know that the Lord put me here. He used the voters of District 38 to get me here and so I simply stand up for what I believe in and I certainly try to allow the Holy Spirit to guide and direct my thoughts, not only my conversation but the tone of my conversation and, certainly, I want to be testifying on the floor and I want to be voting in a manner that would be pleasing to God.

My name in Philip Erdman, originally from Bayard, Nebraska, up by Scottsbluff. I represented the 47th legislative district in the Nebraska legislature from 2001 until 2008. When I was a junior in college was when I first thought about the idea, or had the idea presented to me, about running for office. As a young man and running against a seasoned incumbent, you strongly and very quickly learn to rely on God because you realize that you are incapable of tackling, you know, this type of effort on your own. And I saw it as what God was calling me to do—to be faithful—and if you go back in Jeremiah, it talks about, you know, where Jeremiah says, *"Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak; I'm only a child*." And God's reply is, "*You know, I will protect you*." It doesn't say that you'll win; it doesn't say that you'll prevail but it provides a great deal of hope. And so that was kind of the verse that I carried through my campaign as I began in politics that, regardless of the outcome, God is calling me to be faithful. And we are the same people no matter where we are. We are to be *salt and light*. I don't read anywhere in the Bible where it says, *"Don't be salt and*

light ***here*** or *don't be salt and light* ***there*** or don't *go into* ***this*** *part of the world to preach the gospel* or *don't go into* ***this*** *part,"* and I think one of the things that I think is important is that as we do interact, whether it's in a political setting—maybe especially in a political setting—that we do so in a manner that reflects positively and ultimately honors God.

I'm Senator Mark Christiansen from Imperial, Nebraska. I represent District 44. You know God has what He wants to accomplish and He's looking for people that are willing to step up and lead and to be used by Him. And that's what I believe serving in the legislature is. For me I believe God called me and serving Christ in politics is just a—should be—part of your normal life as an individual Christian—should be no different than the way we act in the job at work. We should be accountable to do the work that we're charged to do in our job. A legislative career is no different. We have a job to promote Jesus Christ, to win others to Jesus, to present bills that will honor Him and strengthen the state.

Tom Carlson:
As far as being involved in government, I think the worst thing that a believer can do is nothing, and by nothing that means they may not vote, they probably criticize what's going on but do nothing to influence it. We have a responsibility.

Philip Erdman:
You know, short of personally running for office, I think those mandates of praying for the elected leaders and also being an encouragement, I think are some very important things that must be done, regardless of whether people are personally on the ballot or not.

Mark Christiansen:
Well, I think we can honor our leaders by obeying the laws of the land unless they conflict with God's Word. That's what He's commanded us to do but if we'll step up and take the leadership roles and make this world a better place, it allows us to have a better place to live, which, if we don't, the opposite happens. I always pray to be faithful; I pray to be honorable to God; I pray to hear His Word and pray to be able to execute what He has for His agenda or His desires for me to accomplish in the legislature.

Philip Erdman:
That encouragement, that prompting, is to be able to make sure or be able to rely on the Lord more often. I think sometimes we get comfortable. We think, *"Well, things are going great; I'm in control*," and, in reality, God has always been in control.

Tom Carlson:
I appreciate prayer of people that simply ask for wisdom for me, and that I would be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, regardless of the issue and the circumstance, so that my response would be that that would be pleasing to God.

[End Video]

Mark:

We thought it'd be fitting, as a conclusion today, that we take a few moments to pray for our national leaders and that God would continue to work and move and use us among them. I just want you to know that there is a ministry called Capitol Ministries—it's a national ministry that seeks to

plant a faithful witness to political leaders in every state capital in our country as well as our national capitol and some foreign capitals as well. This is Ralph Drollinger, his wife Danielle is here. They're from California. He did that for a number of years in the California legislature in the capital in Sacramento and now he's on his way to Washington. He leads a Bible study there every week and is discipling men and women of faith there and to seek and to reach people there as well. We have a ministry here in Lincoln, Capitol Ministries, and Perry Gauthier is a part of our church and he's the coordinator and leader here in Nebraska. They have a booth out here in the foyer; you can stop out and learn more about that and also there's going to be a gathering tonight in the coffeehouse at 7:00 p.m. if you want to hear more about what God's doing, how to be involved. We sure encourage you to come tonight just for informal time at 7:00 p.m. and again tomorrow night, there'll be another opportunity. But, Ralph, I wanted you to come and just tell us maybe a couple things that God is doing and then, also, lead us in prayer as we thank you for being here. By the way, yes, he did play basketball in case you're wondering. (Laughter)

Ralph:
Probably the best way to step into this is my own sports career, down the road in Kansas, is where FCA started in the '50s. And the old people that started FCA—which they're probably quite old now—would tell you that back in the 1950s, there were maybe one or two athletes in the whole country who could articulate their faith in Christ in that people group or that industry. And today there are literally thousands. You can't go a week, in local or national print or electronic media, and not hear some athlete talk about his faith in Christ. And that's really as a result of the sports ministry movement in American culture and when I headed up the trade organization of America's sports ministries, we had about eighty-five different national sports ministries that have spawned from FCA and other entrepreneurs of ministry. And using that as kind of a metaphor and analogy, what Danielle and I thought fifteen years ago, when we started Capitol Ministries is, "Why not put together an infrastructure like that amongst the political people group?" Why not put, for starters, fifty men in fifty capitals and hopefully a ministry in D.C., wherein we could have Bible expositors, evangelists, disciple-makers who could work alongside the politician? And so we've been about that quest, now, for quite some time and have just started the ministry in Washington, D.C. Perry runs the ministry here and he's had a lot of fruit and you can see some of those people as you watched the video and I think your dad is here, too, this hour. Where is he sitting? He's been a great encouragement to me as a senator as we've tried to build Capitol Ministries in states throughout the nation. He's always been faithful to come to my Bible studies at the national legislative meetings and always encouraged me, so it's great to have you here. But, in D.C., we've been expositing the Word of God now for six months. We have a ministry that meets in the family room right off the floor of the House right after the end of first votes, on either Monday or Tuesday nights, depending on which night they come back. They'll come back tomorrow night and we'll be there teaching the Word of God. And we have about thirty-seven of the fifty that we've been cultivating who are now a part of that ministry and our desire, obviously, is to reach all five thirty-five—the lower House and the upper House. And, interestingly, if you want to go back to baseball for a second, on a career path of a legislator, third base is like the State House, and a lot of guys come around third base trying to get to home plate before they get tagged out or the inning's over at third base because of what's called term limits. And seventy-five percent of the legislators in D.C. come through State Capitol Ministries, so we've always thought if we have ministries on third base, it would naturally lead to a strong ministry on home plate, and that's occurred. To give you an idea, relative to your sermon this morning, one of the guys that I discipled in the California capital who's a rice farmer named Doug LaMalfa had just won the state senator primary race and he'll win the general and he'll then go from the assembly to the senate and his goal has been, as soon as that congressional seat opens up in the Redding area, and the representative there is quite old, then he

wants to come to D.C. to help Capitol Ministries in D.C. The last primary election you just saw in Nevada, Sharon Engel has been a strong ministry component of our Carson City ministry, now, for the past eight years. She and her husband want to come to D.C. to build Capitol Ministries in the Senate. Another gentleman from Kansas who is with Campus Crusade went to Colorado and he got a law degree and now he's in Congress, a big part of our ministry in D.C. So that's how it happens and I would encourage the kids behind us and you out there to consider if this might be a career path for you, because in a representative form of government, we just need more men and women who catch the vision to be in D.C. who are mature in Christ. And it's a lot easier to inherit someone who's mature in Christ from the church than it is to evangelize the lost that are already set in their ways and I could count on my hands and fingers the amount of people that have really come to Christ through our ministry in the last ten or twelve years. Unfortunately we're not like in the middle of a revival in our country and yet the people that have been buoyed in their faith, who come in maybe as a young believer or strong believer and then leave stronger than when they came, is a huge success for the Body of Christ as we relate to government because most come and, within a couple years, because of the surrealism of the power and the fact that they're away from their home and they're away from their spouse, they're away from their church, they typically leave a shell of the person that they were when they arrived and that's because we haven't had biblically solid ministries on the campuses of the capitals. And so, pray for us in that regard, that God would raise up not only fifty men for fifty capitals who are Bible expositors, but many men and women who would run for office that would name the name of Christ and vote according to their convictions.

Mark:
Lead us in prayer to that end, would you?

Ralph:
Thanks, Mark.

Father, it's a wonderful country that we live in and it's somewhat counter-intuitive that the minute the church separates from the state, the church would become so strong, as in American history and so we're thankful for that understanding of institutional separation. And yet we know that even though we are separate institutionally, we're not separate influentially. And so we want to continue to influence this country that we count so dear and we ask that You, the Lord of the harvest, would raise up many harvesters for the state capitals who would be disciple-makers as well as candidates like Sharon Engel or Doug LeMalfa or Doug Lamborn who would seek federal office and be a witness for Christ in the midst of those hallways, as well as the state houses here. Bless Perry as he ministers amongst the Unicameral. Give him much fruit in his ministry and may some run for state as well as federal office from even this room in the days ahead. And, Lord, we give You the thanks in advance, by faith, knowing that You do call your disciples to be agents of illumination and preservation, light and salt in the respective halls of governance. May we be like the apostle Paul who, when he was called in Acts 9, understood as Ananias communicated to him the clarion call of Jesus on his life. "Go, Ananias, for he, Saul, is a chosen instrument of mine to declare my glory before the house of Israel and kings and the Gentile people." and may we remember his charge to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2 as he said, "Parakaleō Prōton," I call you alongside of me as your first priority to evangelize kings and

those who are in authority. So may we continue that emphasis today, that we might lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity as a result and continue to propagate the gospel from the resourcefulness of our country to not only our own status, but to that of the whole world. May you give us ministries in capitals worldwide. For Your glory we pray, in Jesus Name, Amen.

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