



Politicians: God's Priority

Part I: Selected Passages

TO: **LEGISLATORS**

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For the next two weeks I would like to digress from our study of the Gospel of Mark and present a two-part series on the importance that God places on you reaching your fellow politicians for Christ. You may be surprised to learn that the Bible places a high priority on witnessing to political leaders; my prayer is that these next two studies will illumine your heart to the priority every Christian Legislator should place on building his or her own personal ministry in the capitol community. May God bless you this week as we trace this idea throughout the Church Age. Next week I will expand the study beyond that...

I. EXPLORING THE MANDATE

The following three portions of the New Testament provide the best initial understanding of this missiological emphasis that runs throughout the Word of God.

A. 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

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, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The Apostle Paul urges Timothy to pray evangelistically, not only for all men but specifically for “kings and all who are in authority.” Verse 1 begins, “First of all, then,” or *parakalo oun proton* in the Greek. *Parakalo* is a compound word comprised of the preposition *para* and the verb *kaleo*. *Para* means “to come alongside” while *kaleo* means “to call.” Together, *parakalo* is an emphatic verb that means “to call alongside.” Paul heightens this command with “first of all,” or *proton*, to indicate its priority (*proton* is used to signify first in priority versus sequence). In other words, Paul wanted Timothy to join him in praying evangelistically for kings and those in authority. This was not an afterthought in Paul’s mind. Concern for political leaders was an emphasis that ran throughout

his ministry and was born in his Damascus Road conversion experience.

B. ACTS 9:15

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel"

From the inception of Paul’s calling, the Lord revealed to Ananias (Jesus’ surrogate messenger to Paul, then known as Saul, in this passage) that Paul would be His “chosen instrument ... to bear [His] name before the Gentiles and *kings* and the sons of Israel.” Kings were one of the three “people-groups” God called Paul to evangelize.

There were many cities in the Romans Empire that had not heard the gospel. How did Paul decide where he would next travel? Certainly there were many factors he considered, but one of those was the presence of political leaders. Thus, the vast majority of cities Paul chose to visit stemmed from his Acts 9:15 calling; they were capital cities. Note the following in this regard:

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- > PAPHOS WAS THE CAPITAL CITY OF CYPRESS
 - > PERGA WAS THE CAPITAL CITY OF PAMPHILIA
 - > PISIDIA ANTIOCH WAS THE CAPITAL CITY OF SO. GALATIA
 - > ICONIUM WAS THE CAPITAL CITY OF LYCONIA
 - > THESSALONICA WAS THE CAPITAL CITY OF MACEDONIA
 - > ATHENS WAS THE CAPITAL CITY OF MODERN GREECE
 - > CORINTH WAS THE CAPITAL CITY OF ACHAIA
 - > EPHESUS WAS THE CAPITAL CITY OF PROCONSULAR ASIA
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He ministered to Jews and Gentiles, but it is important to not overlook that in this passage Paul was also called to be a missionary to evangelize kings.

C. THE BOOK OF ACTS



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In that regard, of the thirteen individual conversions recorded by Luke in the Book of Acts, seven are politically-related people. This emphasis of reaching governing leaders is vividly illustrated in the 28 chapter narrative. Note the common vocation amongst the following conversions:

- **THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH, THE TREASURER OF CANDICE, THE QUEEN OF ETHIOPIA (8:27)**
- **CORNELIUS THE CENTURION, A MILITARY LEADER OF 100 MEN (10:17)**
- **BLASTUS, THE KING'S CHAMBERLAIN (12:20)**
- **SERGIUS PAULUS, A ROMAN PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR (13:7)**
- **THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER (16:27)**
- **DIONYSIUS, THE AREOPAGATE JUDGE (17:34)**
- **PUBLIUS, THE GOVERNOR OF MALTA (28:7)**

It is insightful to note that Luke is writing Acts for Theophilus (cf. Acts 1:1). In that he calls him "most excellent" a title used to address governors (cf. Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25), it is quite possible that Luke is writing this account, as well as the gospel of Luke (cf. Luke 1:3) for the purpose of persuading a governmental leader to come to faith in Christ. This would explain why over one-half of the individual conversion accounts recorded in the book of Acts involve politically-related people. Luke's purpose could be either to relate to Theophilus that other governmental leaders have come to Christ, or to illustrate the fulfillment of Paul's call in Acts 9:15, if not both.

Paul's Acts 9:15 calling gives insight as to why he desired to visit Rome, and even travel as far as Spain (cf. Rom. 15:23-24). In Acts 23:11 the Lord revealed to Paul that he must testify of Him in Rome.

Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.

The Apostle longed to fellowship with the church in Rome (cf. Romans 1:10-12), but he had at least one other reason for making the voyage: evangelism. This is evident from Acts 27:23 where the Lord adds that Paul "must stand before Caesar." Therefore, out of obedience to his calling, Paul was compelled to take the gospel to Caesar. History evidences that Caesar did not get saved, but Philippians 4:22 indicates that Paul had been used by God in a powerful way:

All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

Paul was a man governed by the vivid memory of his conversion. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume his mission to Spain somehow aligned with his calling as well, and it did. Spain was a mineral-rich colony on the westernmost extent of the Empire. It had a population of Jews and Gentiles, who hadn't heard the gospel.

Did Spain have a contingency of political leaders? Yes. The orator Quintilian, the writer Martial and the statesman Seneca resided there. The Roman emperors Trajan and Hadrian were born there as well. According to Clement of Rome (writing in A.D. 95) Paul reached Spain and "gave his testimony before the rulers."

The Apostle labored to reach political leaders with the gospel. His deep concern for their salvation perhaps explains why he gave such an emphatic mandate to Timothy in the previously cited passage (1 Timothy 2:1-4). To recap, Paul instructed Timothy to pray for the salvation of Rome's political leaders. The same principle applies for all believers today. Christian legislators should desire to see their fellow political leaders come to know Christ.

FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION, GOD'S PEOPLE PURSUED AN EVANGELISTIC MINISTRY TO POLITICAL LEADERS IN FOREIGN NATIONS.

This consuming evangelistic zeal encompassed Paul's life after his Damascus Road conversion. The same emphasis exists throughout in Scripture.

Next week we will explore this further. Stay tuned.