

Things I Learned From This Election

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LEE'S SUMMIT, Mo.—It's over, but not really. In politics, it's never over. It just transitions to a new phase. The acrimony will remain, and the campaign for 2018 will begin sometime next week. That is just one thing that I learned not just from this election but from my interest in politics over the last 16 years.

Sixteen years ago "my guy" won the White House. I still think my guy is a decent human being, but a savior he was not and a savior he could not be. That pay grade is beyond that of any president. A good president's job is to be a caretaker of sorts and a servant in fact.

Paul wrote this to the Romans: "Rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good . . . He is God's servant . . ." (Romans 13:3-4, NIV).

Here is something that I learned this year. I learned that God loves—really loves—Hillary Clinton, and I learned that God really loves—really loves—Donald J. Trump in spite of the fact that both candidates have their false gods.

The Clintons' false god for decades has been their craving for power. That god has now been taken from them. Maybe this is the pivot point in their lives. Maybe this will cause them to refocus on who they are and what they have become and their hearts will turn to the true God.

Mr. Trump's false god seems to be his own ego. The presidency can be either the world's most humbling job or the most arrogant-inducing.

Both Mr. Trump's situation and the Clintons' are good reasons to practice Paul's instructions in the book of 1 Timothy.

Paul wrote: "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

It is curious, is it not, that, in the very context of praying for those in authority, Paul tells us that God wants all people to be saved and to come to know Him.

If you despise Mrs. Clinton, how would you react if she were to walk into your church, completely repentant and eager to learn?

And if you think Mr. Trump is deplorable and the epitome of wretchedness, what if he turns to his Maker in sincerity and humility?

Do you pray for the Clintons and the Trumps, that this very thing will happen?

Why shouldn't we pray for civic leaders whether we like them or not? Under what biblical authority are we instructed to hate them and revile them as opposed to pray for and mourn over them?

Remember when King Saul abandoned the God of Israel, thereby causing the God of Israel to abandon him? The prophet Samuel nevertheless continued to pray for Saul and mourn over him (1 Samuel 15:35).

During one election cycle a few years ago, I became fascinated with the middle verses of the King James Bible. Psalm 118:8 has the same number of verses following it as before it.

I had been correctly praying that that God would give us the president we needed and not the one we deserved. Which type of president we got that time around will be for history to decide, but the "middle verse" is still with me whenever matters of politics invade my life.

"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes" (Psalm 118:8-9).

Of course, it is just a coincidence that verse 8 is in the exact center of the classic English-language Bible. And, of course, this does not mean that elected leaders are all evil. It is a reminder that they are merely caretakers and servants until the real Prince of Peace takes over. They will not and cannot ever be our saviors.

It took me 16 years to learn that lesson.