

On Voting

David Lipscomb

Excerpted from *On Civil Government* (1913)

p. 145-146.

To the claim that a Christian is bound to vote, when he has the privilege, for that which promotes morality, and to fail to vote for the restriction and suppression of evil is to vote for it, we have determined that, to vote or use the civil power is to use force and carnal weapons. Christians cannot use these. To do so is to do evil that good may come. This is specially forbidden to Christians. To do so is to fight God's battles with the weapons of the evil one. To do so is to distrust God. The effective way for Christians to promote morality in a community, is, to stand aloof from the political strifes and conflicts, and maintain a pure and true faith in God, which is the only basis of true morality, and is as a leaven in society, to keep alive an active sense of right. To go into political strife is to admit the leaven of evil into the church. For the church to remain in the world and yet keep itself free from the spirit of the world, is to keep alive an active leaven of morality in the world. If that leaven loses its leaven, wherewith shall the world be leavened? or if the salt lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted or saved? God has told his children to use the spiritual weapons, has warned them against appealing to the sword or force to maintain his kingdom or to promote the honor of God and the good of man. When they do as he directs them, and use his appointments, he is with them to fight their battles for them and to give them the victory. When they turn from his appointments to the human kingdoms and their weapons, they turn from God, reject his help, drive him out of the conflict and fight the battles for man's deliverance with their own strength and by their own wisdom. Human government is the sum of human wisdom and the aggregation of human strength. God's kingdom is the consummation of Divine wisdom and in it dwells the power of God.

To use the human [power] is to reject Divine wisdom and divest ourselves of Divine help. To use the Divine is to follow Divine wisdom and to seek and rest upon Divine help. There can be no doubt as to which is the Christian's duty. Then the Christian most effectually promotes public morality by standing aloof from the corrupting influences of worldly institutions and maintaining a pure religious morality. The same difficulty was propounded in the early churches: ... the same objections were made to the positions of the early Christians, that are made today to this position. They then beyond doubt held the same position we advocate. We make the same reply these early Christians made. We occupy the same position they did. Let us serve God with all our mind and strength and soul in his kingdom, and he will be our strength and our shield.

And true faith in God will lead us to trust him do his will, use his appointments diligently and faithfully and leave results with him; knowing that when we obey him and so "work out our salvation with fear and trembling, it is God which works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure." And when Gods works in and through us, all good results must follow.

David Lipscomb (1832-1917)

was a significant figure in the history of the Churches of Christ. His most recognized book ON CIVIL GOVERNMENT, builds a biblical case for the Church's non-participation in civil governments.