

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG116 – We Have A Choice

Hello, and welcome to the podcast. I hope you are returning having listened to previous podcasts, but if this is your first time, welcome. I hope this is a blessing to you. This will be interesting. I am entitling it, *We Have A Choice*, because we are dealing with the reality of upcoming midterm elections in the United States. If you do enjoy the teaching, I would ask that you go to your podcast provider and give us a thumbs up, five-star rating, or give us a good comment that people can see. Share it with others who are part of your social media. We want to get the Word out there, and we want to grow in those who are listening to us, so we would appreciate your help with that.

I want to read an article out of Wikipedia, entitled “United States midterm election,” so that we have an understanding of really what midterm elections are all about. I know these elections are going to be very important, and they are getting a lot of attention, so we want to have an understanding of midterm elections. The article reads thus:

“Midterm elections in the United States are the general elections that are held near the midpoint of a president's four-year term of office, on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Federal offices that are up for election during the midterms include all 435 seats in the United States House of Representatives, and 33 or 34 of the 100 seats in the United States Senate.

“In addition, 34 of the 50 U.S. States elect their governors for four-year terms during midterm elections, while Vermont and New Hampshire elect governors to two-year terms in both midterm and presidential elections. Thus, 36 governors are elected during midterm elections. Many states also elect officers to their state legislatures in midterm years. There are also elections held at the municipal level. On the ballot are many mayors, other local public offices, and a wide variety of citizen initiatives. Special elections are often held in conjunction with regular elections, so additional senators, governors and other local officials may be elected to partial terms.

“Midterm elections historically generate lower voter turnout than presidential elections. While the latter have had turnouts of about 50-60% over the past 60 years, only about 40% of those eligible to vote go to the polls in midterm elections. Historically, midterm elections often see the president's party lose seats in Congress, and also frequently see the president's opposite-party opponents gain control of one or both houses of Congress.” That is the end of the article from Wikipedia.

It is interesting how, generally speaking, we get less voter turnout in midterms than we do in presidential elections, and yet very significant issues transpire. When it talks about the fact that the President's opposite party wins control generally of one or both houses of Congress, that can be a huge turnaround in what happens in the governance of the country. We recognize that these elections are right upon us as this podcast is coming out, and I want to encourage everybody, for one thing, to get out and vote. We have this privilege in America to cast our ballot and to make our choice for those who are going to be in elected office. I think that however we see things going in the country today, it is still important that we exercise that right and that freedom that we have; because there is no greater way to lose our freedoms than to not take advantage of them. So that is the first thing I would say in this

podcast – let's get out and vote, however you feel led to vote. And I would say, how do you feel led to vote? I think it is important as believers that we do pray and seek the Lord about those that we are electing towards office. We recognize that these people are going to be very influential in our country and in what happens in our nation, so we should make every effort to be led by God, and to discern those who are going to do the best possible job. But the question does remain – how much do we, as believers, really get involved in politics? and how much does the election really matter to us? There is a lot of controversy and a lot going on in this country over the last several years, certainly throughout the last presidency, about what involvement believers have. What involvement does God have? How are we to get involved, as believers, into the process of politics beyond our voting? Do we run for office? Do we try to elect believers into office? There is so much controversy about this right now, and that is one of the reasons why I wanted to do this podcast. My goal is to at least throw some other thoughts into the process that people are going through in really making their own decisions.

I think politics is something that people do have to make their own decisions about. As believers, we try to make all of our decisions based on the things of God, and being led by the Holy Spirit in the way God wants us to be led. That is something that cannot be dictated to us. It is something that each individual has to take the responsibility for in their own walk with God, as we do with every other part of our walks with the Lord. So it is a matter for prayer. It is a matter of individual concern that we really reach, believing for God to lead us and direct us; because obviously, these individuals that we are electing are going to have an impact on our lives, and on our freedoms, and on the future of this nation.

That being said, I want to recognize that I think we as believers can get too involved with the political system in trying to create the United States into what has been called a Christian nation. For me, personally, I do not believe that there is such a thing as a Christian nation. I do not believe the United States of America is a Christian nation, according to the definition that many give for that. If it were a Christian nation, it would have been founded much differently, and our Constitution would read far differently than it does, because it allows for freedom of religion. And in that very statement, it is obvious that it is not a Christian nation; it is a nation that allows for the freedom of people's individual religion and worship, whatever that may be. So then, what part do we play, and how do we relate to these things? What I really want to focus on in this podcast is a recognition for us, as Christians, as believers in God – and I would include certainly Judeo-Christian values, and the Jewish people as well as the Christians in this country – of how we do believe, and what our impact is. I think how we believe individually is what our concern should be. And I think that, biblically, that is the concern that we are shown.

I want to look at First Kings, starting in chapter 18, because we have to ask the question: how much impact do the elected leaders really have? and do those elected leaders, especially within a democracy, have the ability to override the people that they are governing? I think that we need to really look at this strongly, because in some ways, there is a sense right now that the leadership of the country is taking the country in possibly a wrong direction. And I would say, over the last couple of presidencies, this has been an issue to many – is the government moving in a wrong direction? are the leaders of the government taking the nation down a wrong path and in a wrong direction? Now, I think we have to back that statement up, and we have to look at the reality that we are a democracy, and this country is founded on democracy, as are other nations in this world. And I believe that as democracies, to say that our leaders are taking us in a wrong direction can be kind of a cop-out to the recognition of who “We the People” really are. We are founded upon We the People, and so we have to understand that the leaders we see in place are a result of We the People. I know there is a concept of saying, “Well, the

elections are rigged,” or, “the elections are stolen,” or things like that are going on. But I think, again, everything that takes place in our nation, in our government, has to come back to a foundational root of We the People, if we take the responsibility for the reality of being a democracy. And whatever is transpiring is somewhere along the line a result of those who are in leadership; and those who are in leadership over years, going back even, say, fifty years, are still the result of the election process, and of the process of democracy working itself out. And so, I think we must, as believers, recognize and take responsibility for our part in the democracy. We must take our responsibility in how we are an impact on the individuals in this nation. In other words, what we as Christians really should look to impact is not just an election; we need to be concerned about where, in this country, are We the People really going. Because ultimately, that is what is going to determine who is in office and sway the direction of the government.

I think there is a way in which we, if we are not careful, can sort of absolve ourselves of a sense of responsibility to the reality of being a democracy. This may be another motivation for us as believers to engage in evangelism, and engage in getting the Word out of faith and of our beliefs, and seeking to impact this nation with our beliefs as Christians. Because our beliefs as Christians are based, hopefully, on the Bible, on what the Bible says and what it teaches morally; it affects our conduct and everything we do. Ultimately, that is what affects our vote: how we vote, for whom we vote. And so, I think we have to back up to where our faith really engages with this nation, and how it engages with the nation. If we feel there are problems that need to be corrected, or if we feel there is a sense that possibly the nation is going in a wrong direction, then I think we need to really look and find out how do we impact that direction, and what really, ultimately, will correct or bring changes to the overall direction that we, as a nation, and our government, as a government of We the People, are in the process of going.

I do not know if this makes sense to you, but again, very simply, I think that we can absolve ourselves with just saying, “Well, I voted and my party did not win, that person won.” But I think there can be something to recognizing why things are being put in place as they are being put in place. I will use one example, and that is the feeling that God is being invited out of our government. He is being invited out of our government. He is being invited out of our schools. I hear that all the time, I see it all the time. I believe that is, in fact, happening, where we have laws being passed that work against our freedom of religion. But why is God being invited out of our society and our government? I think, ultimately, He is being invited out by virtue of We the People. And our ultimate leverage as Christians, as believers, is to infuse this nation, and the people who live in this nation, with our beliefs, our teachings, and our faith; and to bring them at least the opportunity to see and understand Christian faith, Judeo-Christian values, and let them choose to walk in a way that is serving God – rather than serving something other than God the Creator that we as Christians believe in.

This can be possibly disturbing to a lot of people, and you say, “No, we need to be activists, and we need to get out and do this and that.” But without changing We the People, we are not going to change what really is transpiring in the government. I want to give one example of this. I know there are many that can be given, and maybe I will do another podcast or two about this. I want us to look at First Kings 18 and see what was transpiring there. Now we know that this is the land of Israel, and it was being ruled by Ahab as king; and Jezebel was also very much leading the country along with Ahab. They were both negative believers, in the sense that they were following other gods. They were following Baal, they were following Asherah, and they were encouraging and leading the people that way. Here are leaders, national leaders, who with absolute intent are trying to pull Israel away from following God and out of following God. So if we feel like we are in a similar situation here in this country, where it seems as

though leadership is trying to take We the People away from God, then maybe we should look at what happens in this story.

In 1 Kings 18:17-19, Ahab runs into Elijah. "Ahab said to him, 'Is this you, you troubler of Israel?' He said, 'I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and you have followed the Baals,'" or Baal, if you want to use that terminology. "Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." This is interesting, because here Elijah recognizes that Ahab and Jezebel, as the leadership of Israel, are trying to pull the people into following other gods, taking them away from following the true God, from keeping the commandments of the Lord. There are many things today that we could apply this to, at least as I hear on the news and from Christians that I am hearing from; the feeling and the sense that it is the leadership that is taking us away. Elijah recognizes it and says, "Your father's house, they have forsaken the commandments themselves," and they are doing these things, and it is having an impact. Yes, it is having an impact. But notice what Elijah does as a solution: his first requirement is, "Gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel." In other words, Elijah is not going to go into a confrontation with the government. He is not going to confront Ahab and Jezebel as the solution to the problem. He is saying, "I want to address all of Israel. I want to address We the People." And so, he requires that they gather all of Israel together at Mount Carmel, and that they also gather the prophets of Asherah and the prophets of Baal, and bring them together; because Elijah is going to, you could say, confront them. But the truth is he does not confront them. He, again, is trying through this whole story to present to Israel, to We the People of Israel, who God is, and that God is God, and that He is the One with authority and power, and that He is the One they should be worshiping and serving and following. And so, they gather all the people.

In verses 30-36, "Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come near to me.' So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord which had been torn down. Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, 'Israel shall be your name.' So with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed. Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, 'Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.' And he said, 'Do it a second time,' and they did it a second time. And he said, 'Do it a third time,' and they did it a third time. The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water. At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, 'O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word.'"

See, to me there is a way in our faith, in our serving God, that we have to exalt God in this country. We have to exalt who He is. We have to be worshiping Him in a very public way, in a very overt way, so that others can observe our service and understand that we are here because of His Word, and representing His commandments, and representing what He has told us to do and how He has told us to live.

In verses 37-39, Elijah says, "Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again." So is he addressing Ahab, who is the leader? Is he addressing Jezebel, who is leading the nation? He is not really that concerned about those leaders, because he knows that at some point, if the people's hearts are turned back, then the leadership will be dealt with. He said, "'You have turned their heart back again.' Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water

that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.'" The heart of all Israel was changed. Out of this we see that Israel is changed, and that Ahab is dealt with, and Jezebel is dealt with, and there comes a change in the nation of Israel. But it does not come from the head of the government down; it comes from the heart of the people up. And I think this is an important fact for us to realize. Elijah recognized what was important. If he was going to see Israel turn and something different transpire than what was going on in the nation at that time, he recognized that he needed to have the hearts of the people change. And I think that, ultimately, that is what we as believers must see. And again, I am not saying, "Don't vote." I am not saying, "Get out and make your opinion known about certain laws or issues that are on a ballot." If we look to only those things as the way of changing this country at this time, we are not going to succeed. I think there has to be a move, and it has to be from the heart of believers. It has to start within each of us, and then it has to reach out and touch We the People of this nation and see their hearts turned, if you want to put it this way, back to the Lord, back to a place where many hearts were when this nation was created. That ultimately will change the nation. It will change, number one, the people on the ballot. I have heard people say, "I would vote, but there are no good candidates to vote for." Well, that in itself could be a sign. Why is it that there is no one that you, as a believer, really feel comfortable voting for? Where is the quality of heart that should be within such a majority of this nation that finding candidates who in their own lives are serving God and walking with the Lord is possible? That should not be an impossibility, that should be the norm. In all of these areas, it goes from the bottom up, and the bottom is from the bottom of our hearts – serving the Lord, doing His will, seeking His will, following His commandments, living the life He has directed us to live in following the Scriptures. These are the things that really will bring change.

It starts in me. It starts with me, and then it moves out from me through the body of Christ, through every aspect of society and the nation where the true change begins to happen. And I think that is really what we need to see in this country. You can call it revival, that's fine; but to me, this is what has to define the concept of revival. It has to be that which turns the hearts of the people to the Lord, to seeking Him with all of our heart until we find Him, and we find His blessings back on this country. However leaders today are leading, just trying to bring a change of leadership is not going to bring the change to this nation that is really needed, I do not believe. We have to see a change of heart in this nation before we will truly see a change in the government of this nation. Is it possible? I believe it is. I believe that we should think like Elijah thought; and that is, if he moved in the will of God and in the power of God, in the authority of the Lord as His representative, things would change. Remember what he said: "I am Your servant, and I have done all these things at Your Word." If we are led by the Spirit of God, and if we are serving the Lord with all of our hearts, then we are going to see the authority; we are going to see the power; we are going to see the miracles that we need to see. People's hearts turn when they see miracles. Look at revivals of the past in this country, like Azusa Street, and you see that the hearts of people change. We need that type of revival. But it is going to start with us. We need to seek Him and say, "Am I walking with You with all of my heart?" I need to come before Him with repentance, with prayer, seeking to absolutely be doing His will in my own life. And as I am, then I need to believe for the miracle power of God through His Word to change the hearts of others. This, I believe, is the kind of revival that we can see, and need to see.

Those were dark times in Israel. There was nothing worse than Ahab and Jezebel. She is mentioned again in the book of Revelation – that is how impactful her persona was in the Scriptures. We need to see those leaders, obviously, changed. But I do not think they are going to be changed in this democracy

without something transpiring that changes We the People. And so, I believe very much for that to happen for us, and I hope you will believe along with me.

In conclusion of this podcast, I would just like to say, remember that we are facing these upcoming elections. The first thing we should do is get out and vote, and exercise, thankfully, the freedom that we have, and the democracy that we do still have and live in. Next to that, these elections are going to have a tremendous impact on our immediate future, and the future of this country. But that being said, the last point I would make is that the greatest impact upon this country, and really every other nation for that matter, is the personal choice that every individual must make – which, simply stated, is whether or not you will worship and serve the God of creation and His King, Messiah, who will reign as Sovereign over this world. That is the true choice that we have to make. That is what we must do. That is what we must decide. And that choice will decide the fate of this nation, and the other nations.

I encourage us, with all of my heart, that we as believers first check our own spirits before the Lord, our own walk with Him, and our faithfulness to be His servants and His worshipers. Secondly, are we creating the impact that we need to see? Do we move, does the church move in the power of God that it needs to have, in order to really turn the heart of We the People? Let's believe for this together as we walk through this time. Amen.