

I. What Happens After an Election?

- A. The Kingdom of God is not advanced through political systems, but through the Church being salt & light as she engages with her community. But our government's policies can affect the conditions for the Church to carry out its mission: they can create favourable conditions for the spread of the Gospel (freedoms of religion, worship, speech, conscience, etc.), or conditions that resist it (forced values and beliefs).
- B. Whichever way an election goes, *the mission and work of the Church* (evangelism, discipleship, worship) *does not change*, and our call to pray does not change.
1. If a "good" government is elected, we pray for the Church to be vigilant and not complacent (Eph. 5:15-21; Mt. 25:1-13), and to remain humble (Phil. 2:5-11; Rom. 12:3; Mt. 20:25-28).
 2. If a "bad" government is elected, we pray for the Church to have boldness, courage, and endurance to continue in the face of resistance (Acts 4:29-30; Rom. 15:5-6; 2 Thess. 3:1-5).
 3. No matter what kind of government is elected, we pray for our elected officials to lead righteously so that it will go well for our nation (Ps. 72; Jer. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:1-4).
- C. The trend is that we usually rally to pray in the weeks leading up to an election, and then go back to life as we know it after the election has passed. But the most common instruction given us concerning prayer is that we are to remain steadfast in it. We want to see *sustained* prayer.

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷**pray without ceasing**, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances... (1 Thess. 5:16-18¹)

⁶On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, ⁷and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth. (Is. 62:6-7)

⁷Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. (Mt. 7:7-8)

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought **always to pray and not lose heart**...⁷And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily... (Lk. 18:1,7-8)

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references taken from ESV

II. Dealing with “Hope Deferred” (Prov. 13:12)

- A. It’s normal to get discouraged when we don’t see answers to prayer; or more specifically, when we seem to get the opposite of what we’ve asked for.
1. Habakkuk faced the same challenge: he had been praying for God to break in a deal with the rampant sin and unrighteousness in Judah, and he was getting discouraged. God assured him He would answer:

³For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end – it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. ⁴“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.” (Hab. 2:3-4)

2. When we think the Lord is being slow to act, it’s usually Him exercising patience and longsuffering (2 Pet. 3:4-12). He is slow to anger, and far more patient than we are.

- B. When we get discouraged in prayer – especially as it relates to government – it is good for us to remember what God is like.

*⁶The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God **merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,** ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty...” (Ex. 34:6-7)*

⁸The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. ⁹The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made. (Ps. 145:8-9)

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. (Mic.7:18, NIV)

1. This was the very point of Jesus’ parable in Luke 18: even an unrighteous judge can be worn down by a persistent widow. But we are not a powerless widow, and He is not an unrighteous judge. We are the elect of God (Lk. 18:6) – He’s already shown us favour by choosing us. If a persistent widow can see justice served, *how much more* will God move on behalf of the ones He has already chosen?

*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s **good pleasure** to give you the kingdom. (Lk. 12:32)*

*¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more** will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Mt. 7:11)*

III. Examples of God’s Mercy Towards “Undeserving” Government Leaders

A. King Ahab – the worst of all of Israel’s terrible kings. He married Jezebel, bringing Baal & Asherah worship into Israel, in addition to Jeroboam’s golden calves.

1. Elijah confronted Ahab about stealing Naboth’s Vineyard and pronounced judgment against him. Ahab actually had a repentant response, and *God showed him mercy*.

²⁵(There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife. ²⁶He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the LORD drove out before Israel.) ²⁷When Ahab heard these words [Elijah’s pronouncement of judgment], he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly. ²⁸Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: ²⁹“Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son.” (1 Kgs 21:25-29, NIV)

B. King Manasseh – son of King Hezekiah (one of the best kings of Judah) but became the worst king in Judah’s history. He led the nation to cross a line in rebellion against God that sealed Judah’s fate: exile to Babylon.

1. He rebuilt all the altars, idols, and high places his father had torn down, built altars and idols to foreign gods *in the temple*, sacrificed his own son in demon worship, practiced multiple forms of witchcraft, and filled Jerusalem with innocent blood (which is believed to have included the prophet Isaiah). *He was worse than the nations that God drove out before them back in Joshua* (2 Kgs 21:1-16).

2. During his reign, Assyria came and took him captive. He earnestly repented, and God had mercy on him. God even *restored him to the throne*, and Manasseh worked to undo all the harm he had done (2 Chr. 33:10-16).

C. King Josiah – Manasseh’s grandson, he became king at eight years old. At the age of sixteen he began to seek the Lord, and at the age of twenty he began to destroy all the high places, Asherim, altars, and idols – even up into the territory of Northern Israel (2 Chr. 34:3-7)!

1. In the eighteenth year of his reign, he ordered the temple to be repaired. During that process, they found the book of the Law. They presented and read it to Josiah.

¹⁹And when the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes...²¹“Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book.” (2 Chr. 34:19,21)

²⁴Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book that was read before the king of Judah. ²⁵Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched. ²⁶But to the king of Judah...Regarding the words that you have heard, ²⁷because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself before me and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD. ²⁸Behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring upon this place and its inhabitants... (2 Chr. 34:24-28)

IV. "Who Knows?"

- A. Four times, this "who knows?" phrase shows up in the Bible (each time in the Old Testament), making the point that God is so merciful and gracious, it's always worth trying. He's so good, He just might turn the whole thing around.

1. When David had already been told that his illegitimate child with Bathsheba would not live, he *still* fasted and prayed for the child's life.

"While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?'" (2 Sam. 12:22)

2. Mordecai to Esther, when he pleaded with her to (illegally) appear before the king and intercede on behalf of the Jewish people.

"For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Est. 4:14)

3. After prophesying that the Lord was sending an army to execute judgment against Judah, Joel encouraged the Jewish people to repent and return:

*¹²"Yet **even now**", declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. ¹⁴Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God? (Joel 2:12-14)*

4. Jonah (begrudgingly) preached to Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrians, that judgment was determined for them. The king heard it, responded with repentance, and called on the entire city – animals included! – to fast and cry out to God.

⁸“...Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

⁹**Who knows?** *God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.* ¹⁰*When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.* (Jon. 3:8-10)

V. Conclusion

- A. God is gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and He relents from sending disaster (Joel 2:13). He delights in showing mercy (Mic. 7:18). Even if disaster has been decreed, He gives everyone ample time to repent so that He can show mercy (Jon. 3:10; 2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Sam. 14:14).
- B. Even if your preferred party is not elected. Even if our government takes a blatant stand against righteousness. Even if they were to make evil the law of the land...we never stop praying for them. He will show mercy to even the worst kings, if they will turn to Him.
- C. As long as we (and they) are breathing, there is a chance that He will show mercy; the He will relent from harm *and leave a blessing instead*. That is why we always pray and never lose heart.