



Why did Moses confront Pharaoh? Why did John the Baptist preach so strongly and directly to King Herod Antipas? Why did Jonah go to an enemy political leader for the Lord—the king of Nineveh? Why did Jesus Christ set Governor Pontius Pilate straight regarding his limited political authority? Why did Luke write 27% of the New Testament for the edification of one Roman political leader? Short answer: because while God loves all leaders, He has a special place in His heart for political leaders (which we called last week “the kings of the earth”).

INTRODUCTION

Had you realized before last week that the Bible teaches that the church has a missionary mandate to reach “kings”? American history is saturated with evidence that Christian morality and ethics were indeed the very base and key to her burgeoning greatness. An “independent audit” of her greatness was conducted by the outside investigator, aristocrat, and French historian Alexis de Tocqueville. He was attributed to have said, “Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power....America is great because America is good...if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”^a

REBUILDING AMERICA: BIBLICALLY

Making America great—by rebuilding her—*must* include returning to her original Christian ardor and ethics. We saw last week in Point 3 that the Apostle Paul put a first-things-first priority on reaching capital cities. Let us next see some of the political leaders Paul disciplined for Christ.

4. THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES CONVERTED IN ACTS

The prevalence of winning governing leaders is vividly portrayed throughout the Book of Acts in the thirteen individual conversions recorded by Luke. In his narrative account of the start of the Church, Luke mentions that at least seven of those people are politically oriented. The common thread among the following converts is this: they are “*those in authority*” (1 Timothy 2:2).

- Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:27) was converted. He was Treasurer of Candice, the Queen of Ethiopia.
- Cornelius the Centurion (Acts 10:17) was converted. He was a Roman military leader of 100 men.
- Blastus (Acts 12:20) was converted. He was the King’s Chamberlain (i.e. Treasurer-Administrator).
- Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7) was converted. He was a Roman Provincial Governor. Remember his name.
- The Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:30-33) was converted. He was a highly trusted governmental official.
- Dionysius (Acts 17:34) was converted. He was one of the Areopagite Judges on Mars Hill in Athens.
- Publius (Acts 28:7) was also converted. He was the Governor of Malta.

Who the apostles evangelized is strong evidence of their priority to influence the government.

5. LUKE AND FIRST-THINGS-FIRST

To whom is Luke writing the Book of Acts? Like his Gospel account, he is penning this volume to “*Most Excellent Theophilus*” (cf. Acts 1:1; Luke 1:3). “*Most Excellent*” was a title used to address governors (cf. Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). Dr. Luke (see last year’s Senate Series “*Luke for Legislators*” [here](#)) wrote his massive two-volume work to persuade and teach one ruler to come to faith in Christ. This explains why over half of the individual conversions in Acts involve political people. Luke’s purpose may be illustrating the fulfillment of Paul’s calling in Acts 9:15.

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Luke may be showing Theophilus that other governmental leaders have come to Christ, intimating that he should do likewise. Luke wrote nearly one-third of the words in the entire New Testament (Luke–Acts combined) to persuade just one political leader for Christ! Luke, too, grasped the God-given, first-things-first strategy of reaching “kings and those in authority.”

6. PAUL GOES TO ROME

Paul’s Acts 9:15 commission tells us why he so passionately desired to visit the Imperial capital of Rome. The Lord Jesus appeared again to Paul to tell him the following about two capital cities:

Acts 23:11 *“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 the world’s most powerful city (Rom. 1:10-12), but this Acts 23 passage shows he had another compelling reason to make the voyage: to fulfill his clear calling by Christ to evangelize Caesar! Next we will see an Angel of God (sent from Jesus) to convey a message to Paul. In the midst of a terrible storm, Paul tells his shipmates:

Acts 27:23f *“For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong...stood before me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar.’”*

➤ There was no reason for any aboard that ship to fear sinking due to the pounding storm. Why? Because onboard was divinely destined cargo—a man with a calling obeying the marching orders of Christ! Paraphrasing, Paul was saying, “*Relax, shipmates! Nothing can sink this vessel—because I am aboard—and have an appointment with the Emperor!*” (No need for trip insurance when you travel with a guy like this!) Paul had a divine unction and a providential mission: to gospelize the capital of Rome and its King, Caesar himself. Paul knew nothing could stand in his way. Hand-picked by the Lord of all storms, he *would* fulfill his destiny.

The Scriptures don’t record an exchange between Paul and Caesar, and history does not record that Caesar was saved as a result of Paul’s mission and witnessing efforts. However, it appears that others in the Imperial Capitol were! When Paul later wrote to the Church in Philippi (from and during his Roman imprisonment), he said:

Philippians 4:22 *“All the saints greet you, especially those in Caesar’s house.”*

THE EMPEROR DID NOT REPENT BUT GOD STILL USED PAUL IN CAESAR’S PALACE.

Paul was governed by obedience to a vivid memory of an arresting conversion, sobering commission, and specific calling. Are we *that* obedient? Are we reaching the world’s capitals for Christ? What might be *your role* in this?

7. PAUL GOES TO SPAIN

Given the formation, distillation, reiteration, and manifestation of Paul’s deeply seated calling, is it not reasonable to assume his intention to visit Spain had something to do with all this? It most certainly did. How is that? He desired to visit Spain after he visited Rome. This is observable from his earlier letter to the Church at Rome:

Romans 15:23f *“Now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while.”*

➤ Spain was a mineral-rich colony on the westernmost edge of the Empire whose Jews and Gentiles had not yet heard the Gospel. Spain was to the Roman Empire what Palm Springs is to America—an upscale retirement community for the world’s wealthy, famous, and powerful.



Spain was *the* community for the movers, the shakers, and the elite of Roman thought and culture. It was home for the most famous retired political leaders in the world. The Roman emperors Trajan and Hadrian were both born and lived there, and the statesman Seneca also resided there. Clement of Rome (the first Apostolic Father of the Church) wrote in AD 95 that Paul eventually did reach Spain and “*gave his testimony before the rulers.*” True to his calling, the apostle labored to impact all the political leaders of the world with the Gospel! Notice that Paul said above, “Now, with *no further place* for me in these regions” [*my emphasis*].

Paul had a deep-seated passion for the salvation of Rome’s political leaders—past and present. This very mindset tells us why he gave such an emphatic mandate to young Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:1-4 that we looked at last week. Paul was driven to reach political leaders for Christ!

➤ *Coach* Paul’s missionary zeal played a large part in the Apostles’ astonishing impact on the first century world with the life-transforming truths of Salvation in Christ. This insight into their *game plan* serves to explain how they pulled off an upset victory in a world dominated by the former reigning champion called “*Greek Philosophy.*” The rag tags on *Team Apostles* “upset the world.”

**THEIR UPSETTING VICTORY
WAS NOT REWARDED BY A
GAUDY, OVERSIZED RING
PRESENTED IN A HAZY
ARENA BEFORE FICKLE FANS.**

Rather, they won an eternal, imperishable crown of future reward in Heaven from the Lord Himself. Not a league official but God Himself will someday say, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*” (*Matthew 25:23, NIV*). May each of us possess a similar passion—a quest for the same eternal championship that God has set before us!

8. FIRST-THINGS-FIRST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The consuming evangelistic fervor to herald the Gospel to “*kings and those in authority*” that encompassed Paul’s life after his conversion is not exclusive to him. This truth is throughout the whole Bible. Let us see a sampling of passages from the “Old Testament” of these principles.^b In Old Testament times, the nation of Israel was meant to be a beacon of God’s glory, shining forth His goodness and salvation into every other nation. More specifically and methodologically, she was set apart *by* God to testify *of* God to the political leaders in the world’s Gentile nations.

LOBBYING FOR THE LORD?

➤ King David sang about the joy he had in his duty to testify about God’s glory in the Psalter (Israel’s hymnbook). Note the lyrics he penned:

Psalm 119:46 “*I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed.*”

I adopted verse 46 as my “life verse” at age 46. I tell people, “*I am not a lawyer or a lobbyist, nor aspiring to be. I am a ministering Bible teacher in the Capitol. You might say I’m a ‘lobbyist for the Lord.’*”

Many organizations, in the name of Christ, lobby those in seats of government for Biblical policy, but there are few who take a ministry posture to reach their hearts and minds with the Gospel and Holy Writ. No wonder that the American church has been quite ineffective in changing the direction of our nation. Returning to the athletic metaphor, it is hard to *win* if you don’t stick to the coach’s game plan. It seems that many pastor-coaches do not even *know* this game plan.

The following Old Testament verses build the case that evangelizing and discipling political leaders is near and dear to God’s heart.



GENESIS: ABRAHAM'S DESCENDANTS

In the Book of Genesis, God promised Abraham that he would one day receive land, have numerous descendants, and be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). Four centuries passed as Abraham's descendants expanded from one family into 12 tribes, finally blossoming into the nation we call Israel. Why did the Lord call Abraham and his descendants out of the world? *Exodus 19:5-6* states it was so they could be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," "a people for His own possession" (*Deuteronomy 4:20*). Israel was called to be God's special people—the envoys of Jehovah—in order to proclaim His excellencies to all the nations.

ISAIAH: NATIONS BUT ALSO THEIR KINGS

In a *general* sense God intended for His people to become a light to the Gentile nations, but in a more *specific* sense He expected His people to be a light to the leaders of those nations. First, note the *general* sense of what God says through Isaiah:

Isaiah 60:3a "All nations will come to your light..."

Now, note the more *specific* sense of what God says through the Prophet Isaiah to Israel:

Isaiah 60:3b "...and kings to the brightness of your rising."

The construction of this passage, from general to specific, parallels that of *1 Timothy 2:1-4*: "First of all...prayers must be made on behalf of all men [general], for kings and all who are in authority [specific]."

➤ Isaiah uses the same type of general-to-specific construction regarding outreach to nations and kings in our final two passages.

Isaiah 49:6-7 "Jehovah says, I will also make you a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth...Kings will see and arise, princes will also bow down, because Jehovah...has chosen you."

Isaiah 62:1-2 "For Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her

salvation like a burning torch. The nations will see your righteousness and all kings your glory."

The repeated general-to-specific outreach of these passages could be paraphrased: *There exists within the Great Commission a priority of reaching the political leaders of all nations for Christ.* Keeping this first thing first is a key to the Great Commission. Indeed, it is also truly key to rebuilding a nation.

REBUILDING FROM THE BASE

Futility and vanity are well expressed by the phrase "rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic." And architecturally so too—it is futile to paint, reroof, or add additional stories to a building whose foundation is sinking. French researcher Alexis de Tocqueville truly searched in vain for the foundational secret to American exceptionalism.

"I entered their judicial courts and legislative halls. But I sought everywhere in vain for the secret of their success, until I entered the church. It was there, as I listened to the soul-equalizing and soul-elevating principles of the Gospel of Christ, as they fell from Sabbath to Sabbath upon the masses of the people, that I learned why America was great and free, and why France was a slave."^c

FOUNDATIONAL WORK IN THE CAPITOL

Most Honorable Senator:

The problems in Nebraska culture and our one-house legislature are symptomatic of a root cause which is foundationally ethical and moral. I implore you—lean heavily on the Lord so you can rebuild from the foundation up. Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it.

Building you up in the most holy faith,

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier, V.D.M. (cell/text: 402-770-6270)

^a Attributed: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (2 volumes).

<http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/cdf/onug/detocq.html>

^b I will provide additional examples in a handout.

^c https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Alexis_de_Tocqueville#Misattributed

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