

Winning God's Election

“Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”
—II Peter 1:10

EACH YEAR, CITIZENS OF the United States go to the polls in early November to participate in the election of various government officials and to vote on numerous propositions, amendments, and the like, which have been put on the ballot. This year does not include a presidential election; however, hundreds of United States congressional seats, many State governor positions, and thousands of other state and local offices, will be up for vote on Election Day.

Elections of our government officials, including presidential elections, have taken place since the year 1789, two hundred twenty-five years ago. Our opening text points out that God has also been engaged in an “election” of those he has “called” to follow in the footsteps of his son Jesus. This election has been going on for nearly two thousand years, and we believe its completion is close at hand. Thus, our subject, “Winning God’s Election,” should especially commend itself to our attention. The

Bible's testimony is that before the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on earth God would send forth his angels to gather his "elect." This elect class, the Scriptures further state, will become joint-heirs with his beloved Son, Jesus, in the grand and glorious kingdom designed to bless all the families of the earth.—Matt. 24:31; Rom. 8:17

Becoming co-laborers with our beloved Master in the kingdom will undeniably be the most wonderful privilege ever offered to anyone. It is indeed the greatest, and most important, election to be attained in mankind's history. Thus, although there is no presidential election this year, it is nevertheless beneficial, we believe, to compare and contrast the election of one to the highest office in the land and that of a Christian running for God's election.

When we think of the grand purpose of the election to which we have been called, we should realize what an extraordinary privilege has been given to us. Nothing greater has ever been offered prior to this Gospel Age period, and never will this invitation be repeated again. We have been nominated to help restore Adam's lost dominion, taken from him when he fell from grace so long ago in the Garden of Eden. Since we have received this great and honored invitation, we must "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and . . . run with patience [endurance and constancy] the race that is set before us."—Heb. 12:1

By means of much soberness of mind, we should have ever before our spiritual vision the measures we must take to ensure that ultimately we will become members of this elect class. To "win" our election to the class described requires that we

must be of those spoken of by the Apostle John as “called, and chosen, and faithful.” (Rev. 17:14) With this in view, let us now see what we can learn from the analogy of our title.

CONVENTIONS HELD

When political parties of this country hold national conventions to nominate presidential candidates, they presume that after all the deliberations are over, the podium has been removed from the convention hall, and all the banners and balloons are gone, the delegates will go throughout the lengths and breadths of the land to capitalize on the momentum and excitement which had been generated during the sessions of the convention. It is their desire and hope that all that they planned and enthusiastically discussed together at the convention will assist them to gain the coveted prize of victory in November when the election is held.

Bible Students also come together in conventions. These gatherings are not designed for frivolity, but are serious times of spiritual refreshment. As we drink deeply from the wellsprings of truth provided by God, we are strengthened, fortified, and assisted toward the successful completion of our heavenly race. We find these assemblages very exciting as we rejoice together as members of God’s family, basking in the precious words of truth, and enjoying holy fellowship with one another. As we receive divine instruction we are immersed in spiritual reflection and introspection. In our estimation, such joy exceeds a thousandfold any pleasure men find in being caught up in the selection of a presidential candidate at a convention.

In the case of both Bible Student and political party conventions, these events are only one step toward eventually winning the election for which the candidate is running. It is appropriate, then, that we look at a number of additional areas which pertain to this subject as we compare and contrast the election of an earthly head of government, chosen to serve in that office for four years, and the election of the class which will be associated with Jesus Christ in the work of his kingdom, and who will reign with him forever.

ENTERING THE RACE

For the political aspirant, great fanfare takes place at the time when candidates announce that they are entering the race for the highest office in the country. A press conference is held so that the entire world, particularly our own nation, can hear the declaration from the candidate who is seeking the office of President. From that time until the election occurs, it is necessary to keep the nominee's name in the news in a positive way. The candidate must maintain a high profile so that people will become familiar with his interests and aims. Political ads are run on television and radio in order to bolster his run for office and promote his campaign platform.

The decision of a follower of Christ to enter the spiritual race is quite different. We have been called to run for this high office based on our desire to seek after righteousness. We are dissatisfied with our present state. We feel a lack of ease with our sinful condition, and we turn to the Lord for help. We begin a reverential study of God's Holy Word,

and find that the biblical truths satisfy our hearts as nothing else can do. As the Father continues to draw us, and we likewise draw nigh to him, we then receive God's call to run for the great prize. (John 6:44; James 4:8; I Cor. 1:9) If we accept the call by making a full and unreserved consecration to do God's will, we then testify to our decision to serve God by water immersion, as a demonstration to other consecrated believers that we are now part of the class who seek the heavenly way.

OUR OPPONENTS

The political candidate has many opponents. Everyone and anyone who would stand in the way of his winning the election and attaining the presidency is the opposition. Initially, the focus is on eliminating all the contenders within his own particular party. Once that has been accomplished, energy is devoted to defeating the standard-bearer of the opposing party.

The opponents of the Lord's people—those seeking to win God's election—are clearly defined in the Bible. They are the world, the flesh, and the Adversary. Paul admonishes us, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12:2) We are encouraged by the same apostle, both by his words and his example, to war against our foe, the flesh. He stated, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."—I Cor. 9:27

The Apostle Peter indicates that the Adversary, Satan, is our most formidable opponent. He tells us, “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” (I Pet. 5:8) Not only is Satan very powerful, he also uses both the world and our fallen flesh as his tools to stumble us at every opportunity. We must never underestimate this wily and crafty foe, for unless we trust in God’s almighty help, he will conquer us, for we are no match for him in our own strength.

As the New Creature battles against the world, the flesh, and the Adversary, we have the major task of keeping our own new will in a position of ascendancy, and our old will dead. We are to mortify the deeds of the flesh. We are to prevent the old man from resurrecting itself and controlling us. In addition, one of the unique features of our running in this race is that we are assisted in making our “calling and election sure” by helping others to do the same thing. The presidential hopeful, on the other hand, has no thought of assisting anyone, but sees as his chief opponents other candidates running for the same office. “Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”—II Pet. 1:10

GAINING THE PEOPLE’S SUPPORT

The presidential candidate travels the length and breadth of our nation in order to gain the support of the people. The organizational plan is that he might visit as many places as he can, to reach and influence as many people as possible in the short period of the electoral race. In the cities and areas where he cannot visit, offices are

established by a network of supporters to persuade the people of that region to vote for their candidate on Election Day.

We, as a “little flock” of Jesus’ followers, do not seek the support of the world in general, but rather to follow his example and walk in his footsteps. We read, “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”—Heb. 13:12,13

We are still in this world, but we are not of the world and its spirit of pride and selfishness. We also recognize that although we must perform our service to God in connection with spiritual things, nevertheless “we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” (II Cor. 4:7) Daily we are in contact with things of the world and the influences of our own fallen flesh which would defile us. If we are faithful in carrying out our sacrificial course, resisting these influences, then we will be pleasing to the Heavenly Father.

Our sacrifice and devotion may bring reproach upon us from the world, as it did Jesus and the apostles. Laying down life itself in God’s service will not be appreciated by the world of mankind. Often, people think that ours is a foolish, wasteful life. Yet we can rejoice, knowing that these same reproaches fell upon the Master, in the same manner, and for the same reasons.

TIME PERIOD OF THE RACE

A candidate for the presidency may formally declare his intent every four years within a specified time limit governed by the laws of our nation.

In contrast to this, those entering the Christian racecourse are told that the entire Gospel Age is the “acceptable year” to run for the “mark for the prize of the high calling of God.” (Luke 4:18,19; Phil. 3:14) Individually, of course, we are limited to the span of our own lifetime. It is during this period that we may seek to make our calling and election sure as joint-sacrificers with God’s beloved Son, who first walked this way nearly two thousand years ago.

Once this “election” feature of the Heavenly Father’s plan comes to a conclusion, it will never be repeated. “They that were ready went in with him, . . . and the door was shut.” (Matt. 25:10) This signals the end of any possibility of running for the office of “the high calling of God.” We should, therefore, be spurred on to greater fervency and zeal in the doing of his will, so that we will not lose this marvelous opportunity.—Jer. 8:20

QUALIFICATIONS SPECIFIED

Those aspiring to the presidency have very specific requirements which must be met. They have to be at least thirty-five years of age. They must be a natural-born citizen of our country, and they are required to have been a resident in the United States for at least fourteen years.

Requirements as candidates to the High Calling are also specific, but much different. They are demanding, but not along the lines of age, place of birth, or residency. Footstep followers of Christ have been “redeemed . . . to God by thy [Christ’s] blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” (Rev. 5:9) Note the words of Jesus concerning the qualifications for candidacy: “If

any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16:24-26) These conditions must continue to be met throughout our entire lifetime since this electoral race ends only with the cessation of our last breath.

PROMISED REWARD

The candidate who achieves election to the presidency of the United States receives great honor from men. He will be considered by millions of people as the "leader of the free world." He will be the head of what most consider the most powerful nation on earth. Most likely, he will be sought out from around the globe for his counsel and wisdom, as leaders of all nations seek solutions to the many perplexing problems which beset our planet. In some cases, he will be called upon for military support to calm world crises, such as have occurred so often in recent decades in the Middle East, many of which continue to this very moment.

Unfortunately, however, it has been demonstrated over and over that any new president and his administration, as members of the fallen human race just as their predecessors were, do not have power to improve the world scene to an appreciable degree. Despite their most noble efforts, we know that this "present evil world" order is under the domination of Satan, the "god of this world." (Gal. 1:4; II Cor. 4:4) As a result, without God's help no real, lasting solutions can be found for the

problems which afflict mankind. Therefore, we will find that as long as Satan continues as the ruler of this world, and although every four years a new aspirant will step up and declare that he will solve the still-continuing, ever-increasing problems of mankind, no true and lasting solutions will be forthcoming.

What a contrasting picture is portrayed concerning those who win God's election. We read about the overcoming saints, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." This will be the portion of the candidates who make their election sure. The glorious results of the new government are vividly described by the revelator. He tells about a "new heaven and a new earth," the real solution to world problems, in which "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."—Rev. 20:6; 21:1-4

The wonderful privilege of administering and directing this grand, righteous government in conjunction with our Lord Jesus Christ will be our reward if we are faithful unto death. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10) The "crown of life" will include the wisdom to help guide an administration such as the kingdom of Christ. It will also incorporate the power to enforce the changes necessary to accomplish the goals of the "platform" of God's plan for the "restitution of all things."—Acts 3:21

ASSISTANTS TO THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

A new president has a vice president, a cabinet, and many staff members to assist him in the administration of the government. Individuals with peculiar talents in varied fields are placed in key positions, both to expedite reforms and changes, and also to carry out the day-to-day functions of the presidential office.

In the case of our beloved Head, Jesus, who will be the chief executive in this new order, it will be similar. We read from the words of the psalmist: "The king's daughter [the faithful followers of Jesus in glory] is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions [the Great Company] that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes [Ancient Worthies] in all the earth."—Ps. 45:13-16

The Great Company or "Multitude," the "companions" spoken of by David, as well as the "princes in all the earth," the faithful Ancient Worthies, will not be idle during the thousand-year reign of Christ. They will share a part in the administration of the government which will guide, direct, assist, and lift mankind back to perfection.—Rev. 7:9,15; Heb. 11:1-40

GAINING THE VICTORY

The successful presidential candidate must speak and proclaim those things which sound good to the ear in order to have any hope of gaining victory. He

must convince the widest spectrum of the electorate that there is something in his ideas that will benefit them personally. People residing in those states with the highest representation in the Electoral College must be particularly appealed to, so the candidate can be assured of attaining a majority of those votes. When the ballots are finally cast and counted, the candidate who has earned the required number of Electoral College votes is declared the winner of the election. Quite often, sadly, once elected to office, the new president either no longer feels compelled, or is unable, to actually carry out the promises upon which he based his platform.

Victory for the followers of Christ is gained much differently. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." (Ps. 24:3-5) The development of purity and all the fruits and graces of the Spirit is essential if we are to gain the victory.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE RACE

In the case of a presidential candidate, no harm is done if he should decide for some reason to withdraw after previously declaring his candidacy. In fact, this is a common occurrence. As consecrated followers of Christ, however, we must persevere in the race despite all odds, persecution, hardship, or trial. It is a difficult and narrow pathway we follow. The Apostle Paul confidently avowed: "I am persuaded,

that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Rom. 8:38,39

Knowing this, we are not to “cast . . . away therefore [our] confidence” in his saving power, because “if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Rather, Paul continues, “We are not of them who draw back unto perdition [utter destruction]; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”—Heb. 10:35,38,39

RESPONDING TO ATTACKS

Almost universally, the presidential candidate either directly, through his most notable supporters, or by political ads, responds in kind to attacks. Many times all three methods are employed. The attempt is made to portray his opponent in a still more unfavorable light and vilify him in any way possible. In reality, a candidate will do almost anything he deems necessary to gain the victory, stopping at practically nothing to achieve his goal. Publicly, he might indicate that he would not stoop to the level of his opposition. Secretly, however, he most often gives tacit approval to his advisors, who are adept at developing demeaning advertisements or making disparaging statements, all designed to draw a negative image of his opposition.

As members of the New Creation, we must conduct ourselves exactly the opposite in order to win God’s election. We are to follow the Master’s example. Of him it is said that no “guile was found

in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” (I Pet. 2:22,23) As the footstep followers of Jesus, this must be our course. We must “speak evil of no man.” (Tit. 3:2) This is especially true concerning others striving for the same election. Paul says, “There is . . . no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 8:1) All who are running this race are covered with the robe of Christ’s righteousness, which hides defects and blemishes. We never need to respond in kind to any accusation made against us because, the apostle continues, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?”—vss. 33,34

EVALUATION OF PROGRESS IN THE RACE

We must remember that the accomplishment of any earthly goal requires an evaluation at regular intervals of the progress attained thus far. In this way we can modify those plans which need altering, so that our ultimate goal will be attained. How important this is to the Lord’s people. It is necessary for us to take inventory of our status, to determine how well we are succeeding in carrying out the principles of truth and righteousness which we have embraced.

As we begin each day, in order for our activities to have maximum benefit, we need to assess how much spiritual growth is taking place in our lives. The Truth is not a “talking” religion, but a “doing” one. Before we offer our morning prayers to God, meditate on our devotional studies, and discuss the

Truth with others, we must take stock of our hearts and minds to determine the direction we are going and the progress we are making along the way.

We offer a few questions for which we must provide our own answers, to help determine whether we are moving in the right direction, standing still, or possibly experiencing retrogression in our spiritual walk. We trust that this sort of introspection might allow us to bring our course in life more into line with what would be pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

Do I demonstrate an increasing ability to redeem the time, spending a larger percentage of it upon spiritual activities?

Has my faith in God's plan grown stronger as I apply the lessons to my life which God permits?

Am I experiencing greater purity of thought, evidenced by a life of increased holiness?

Have I rid myself of any unnecessary "weights" which I formerly carried?

Is my motivation for doing good solely from a desire to be a faithful, righteous servant of God, rather than for approval from men?

Do I habitually approach the Lord for guidance in the small affairs of life, as well as my large concerns?

Have I grown in patience? Do I make allowances for my brethren's seeming faults?

Is my love for God, the Lord Jesus, the Truth, and the brethren growing stronger, as evidenced by deeper spiritual-mindedness?

Have I taken the initiative to eliminate barriers to full fellowship with any brother or sister with whom I feel a sense of distance?

Am I spending more time in prayer?

If our answers are affirmative, we can feel certain that we are on the right course. Our campaign has a firm and good platform. With faith in God, and our hands in his, we can indeed make our “calling and election sure.” If we continue to trust in him to the end, we will surely have the privilege—with our Lord and Master, Christ Jesus—of inaugurating an everlasting government of peace, health, life, joy, and righteousness. His kingdom will bring blessings to all people, and glory to our great God. To him be praise forever and forever. Amen! ■