***As it is in Heaven*:** A Study Through Philippians (Political Series)

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Week 1: We are ambassadors Philippians 1:1-11

Disclaimer:

This will be a wild ride. Some days, you'll say, “Yes, Pastor Mike is right here with me.” Other days, you might think, “No, that doesn’t seem right.”

I once asked an older pastor and mentor, “How do I know if I’m talking about political engagement the right way?” He simply replied, “When everyone is a little mad at you."

Honestly, I am quite optimistic, but this may be a wild ride.

I ask two things.

* First, please stick with me all the way to the end of the series.
* Second, I believe if you do, you will feel more secure than any election outcome could ever offer.

Introduction:
Does anyone know where this comes from?

*"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."*

-Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence, 1776

If you read through the Declaration of Independence, you will discover there are clear things it addresses and things it clearly implies.

* The key word in this is “secure.” Jefferson is assuming the objective truths of God given dignity, rights, and freedom for all people. Government is merely meant to protect these.
	+ Government is not the good. It merely exists to protect the pursuit of the good.
* Our democracy (kratos “ruled” by the demos “people”) does not mean morally compassed by the people, but the people, by popular vote, protect their “unalienable rights” to pursue the objective good. Thomas Jefferson in his Inaugural address in 1801 makes it clear that the government is protective, not directive.
* Therefore, if you remove a clear moral objective from our government, you remove the very assumptions our government was created to secure.
* For my ultra deep thinkers let me say it with great precision. Our government is NOT a moral schema, the idea that we can keep defining and building towards our own moral perfection. Marxism is a schema of perfectibility. We believe God perfects at the Eschaton. Therefore, we aim everything towards Jesus. We believe the best political participants in THIS age will always be the ones who see Jesus, the objective good, the clearest.
* As we will see in this series. My fellow Christians, The Apostle Paul will make it clear, you exist to lean everything towards Jesus, especially politics. And our government actually fits this well. Our government structure wants ontological compassing.

Let’s begin.

Lectio:
Philippians 1:1-11

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. [[1]](#footnote-2)

* In 42 BC, after the Battle of Philippi, where the forces of Mark Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius (the assassins of Julius Caesar), Philippi became a Roman colony and eventually a retirement headquarters for Roman veterans, the ones who benefited from Roman occupancy, the spoils of war, and the rights and privileges of the Roman state.
	+ What does this mean? This town was full of highly committed Roman veterans.
* Rome didn’t mind people practicing other religions as long as the politicians and their positions of power weren’t threatened. Christians frustrated Romans in two primary ways. They declared Jesus as Lord instead of Caesar and constantly challenged their ethics.
* Political tension was high and constant for Christians throughout the Roman Empire, so much so that Paul wrote his letter while under Roman house arrest.
* Paul does not ask them to abandon or leave the tension but rightly engage. We will cover right engagement in the weeks to come.

Actio:

What does this mean?

* Your Christin faith should have real community impact. It isn’t only private.
* You are called to an objective morality that is above man-made political systems. You are an ambassador.
* The ultimate civil structure will come from Christ in the Eschaton. We must constantly remember our ultimate hope is in Christ.
* Christian engagement should mirror the manner, methods, and heart of Jesus. Know Jesus, know how to engage politically.

Next Steps:

Let me pose an “Ask Pastor Mike” question that is actually a summary of a few conversations.

Dear Pastor Mike,

Nothing seems real anymore. From deep fakes and AI to almost all news being an op-ed at best, where do we turn to find the truth? I originally felt like it was my heart, my intuition, but even that has gotten me into a few bad situations and led me to trust things that ended up being a lie too. What can I trust?

My friend, you have front row seats to the moral inadequacy of human knowledge. You are hungry for something more than knowledge, more than fast passing feel good moments, more than merely fallen human.

Let me simply say this;

Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”[[2]](#footnote-3) Philippians 1:6 “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

All I ask today is that you join me on this supra-political journey. My Christian brothers and sisters, while the world may be lost, we are not.

The greatest gift I can offer in this politically charged moment is a community that sees Jesus clearly.

**Definitions:**
**Eschaton**: From the Greek "ἔσχατον" meaning "last" or "end," *eschaton* refers to the ultimate end of the world or the final events in the history of humankind, often associated with the second coming of Christ and the final judgment in Christian theology. It’s part of the field of study called eschatology, dealing with the end times.

**Kratos**: "Κράτος" in Greek means "power" or "might." It is often used to describe dominion or authority. The word is seen in terms like *democracy* (rule by the people) and *autocracy* (rule by one).

**Demos**: "Δῆμος" translates to "people" or "the population." It is foundational in words like *democracy* (rule by the people). In ancient Greece, it referred to the common people, particularly in a political sense.

**Moral Schema**: This refers to a framework or system by which moral concepts are organized and understood. A moral schema helps individuals categorize actions, intentions, and outcomes as right or wrong, typically influenced by cultural, religious, or philosophical values.

**Supra**: A Latin prefix meaning "above" or "beyond." It’s often used in a legal or academic context to refer to something previously mentioned (e.g., *supra* note 1 means "as noted above").

**Unalienable**: Something that cannot be taken away or denied. In the context of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, it refers to rights that are inherent and cannot be given up or transferred—such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

**Endowed**: To be provided or equipped with a particular quality, gift, or right. It suggests something given, often by a creator or higher power, such as when humans are said to be "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights."

1. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.Php1.1&off=9&ctx=Greeting%0a~1%C2%A0Paul+and+Timothy%2c+servants%EF%BB%BF1+) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Php 1:1–11. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.Pr3.5&off=3&ctx=of+God+and+man.+%0a+5%C2%A0~+i%EF%BB%BFTrust+in+the+Lord) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Pr 3:5–6. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)