

July 2016

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## This Is No Time to Lay Down Our Arms

Christians are feeling very discontent—if not discouraged at the moment

*“A nation of well-informed men who have been taught to know and prize the rights which God has given them cannot be enslaved. It is in the region of ignorance that tyranny begins.” --Benjamin Franklin*

An old joke has it that a hiker tripped over the edge of a deep canyon, but delayed the inevitable by grasping a rock outcropping with the tips of his fingers. Crying out, “God, help me!” he heard a distinctively deep calm voice answer “Trust me. Let go.” Hesitating for only a moment, the dangling hiker shouted out “Hello, hello, is there anyone else out there?”

Perhaps millions of prospective voters in both major political parties wish their presidential ideals could be congealed in persons other than the two semi-finalists coming out of Cleveland and Philadelphia. But as they say, it is what it is! Come November 8, Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton, will prevail. For all practical purposes, (except for *believers*), there is no one else out there!

Not since establishment Republicans nominated Senator Bob Dole for President in 1996—and for certain—Gerald Ford in 1976, have a majority (56%) of GOP voters felt so uneasy about their presidential nominee or pessimistic concerning the immediate future of America—and the world.

In Washington State, 40-of-41 delegates attending the Republican national convention in Cleveland, were Ted Cruz supporters, compelled by rules to vote for the “edgy” commercial real estate mogul on the first ballot. Their reason for seeking a delegate slot in the first place? To try to keep a relatively conservative party platform in place.

Democrats, too, from the Evergreen State, are begrudgingly in the process of changing horses. Having mustered an impressive 77% delegate tsunami for their guy Bernie Sanders, most surrendered reluctantly when Hillary stepped to the Dias in Philadelphia to collect her party dues.

Unquestionably, there is a great chasm in the social constructs both within and between the two major parties—perhaps approaching the extreme social divisiveness prevalent during the years leading to the Great Civil War. Neither, however, has a corner on the extreme pessimism now gripping the electorate in 2016.

In the 1770s, many colonists were extremely pessimistic about America’s long-term future due to the increasingly heavy-handed “social” policies of King George III. (We omit the term “fiscal” as only one-of-the 27 grievances listed in *The Declaration of Independence* concerns a fiscal matter). Though many members of the British Parliament urged George to lighten up on their beleaguered cousins in the colonies, he refused to do so.

Enter a relatively small group of young men (average age 33), who did not yield to talk of doomsday. They, as did our Pilgrim founders, believed America was “a planting of the Lord.”

Following “The Shot Heard ‘Round’ the World,” and even after the Declaration of Independence and the war cry “No King but King Jesus,” a separation from Great Britain was not supported by all the colonists. While more than one-third of the nation supported the Patriots’ efforts to break ties with England, nearly as many of the colonists known as Tories were strongly opposed. Their sympathies were vested with England throughout the revolution.

The remaining third of colonists (nestled safely in the middle) never particularly committed themselves one way or the other—essentially sitting out the war while attending to their own businesses and livelihoods.

The fact that General George Washington and his small Continental Army stood-down the world’s mightiest navy and best trained and equipped standing army, while two-thirds of the nation either opposed his actions or didn’t care to be involved, should be instructional and inspirational for this particular audience.

Interestingly, the *rule of thirds* is in play, even in this day. To wit: A little more than one-third of Americans think of themselves as Democrats, a little less than one-third think of themselves as Republicans, and the remaining third, prefer to be known as "independent" or "swing" voters. Predictably unreliable, independent voters can and do swing from voting for liberal candidates and issues in one election to conservative the next—and back again the following cycle, i.e; Clinton to Bush to Barack Obama.

The opinions of many independent voters are likely to mirror what they see or hear in TV ads immediately before an election. It is to this block of voters that the two major political parties ultimately make their appeal following the nominating conventions.

The Bible also speaks of three specific groups even in the Church. To the congregation at Laodicea (Rev 3:15-16), Jesus addressed the works of those who are cold, those who are hot, and that great middle who are lukewarm. And Jesus warns He isn’t warm and fuzzy towards the lukewarm!

### **So what is the application?**

Christians are not in the majority and never have been. Likewise, generations of believers before us have faced as daunting a task as that which now tests our “mettle.” Heroes of the Faith do not wait for public opinion to "swing" their way. They make things happen.

Nehemiah knew something about changing public policy. He was a man of prayer and a man of action. He believed he could use his position and influence to accomplish God’s purposes. He demonstrated that:

- A Christian is both a laborer and a soldier, working with one hand, and fighting with the other.
- The reproaches of enemies should quicken us to our duty, not drive us from it.
- If our enemies cannot frighten us from duty, or deceive us into sin, they can be defeated.

We believe there is a demonstration of Nehemiah’s approach in our time, through the ministry of Franklin Graham, who came to Olympia last month to lead God’s people in prayers (out loud) of personal and corporate repentance. The turnout was stellar. Some 8,500 concerned Christians, raised their voices heavenward as they were further prompted to pray for the salvation of leading candidates, including our Governor and others in authority who may not know Jesus.

Regarding our presidential choice on the November ballot, Graham implored the body of Christ to pray, and then vote. “If necessary,” he added, “hold your nose—but please VOTE!”

Like the hiker dangling over the edge, we are not hearing any other options.

*Rick Forcier*