

A few comments from us as elders pertaining to the current state of our nation.

There are many political, social, and personal viewpoints in challenging times such as these. From vaccines, passports, masks, travel restrictions, and protests, most of us by now have a conviction about what we believe. Recent events would suggest there are many at polar ends of the spectrum when it comes to opinions on many of these things; perhaps some are still unsure or land somewhere in the middle.

What do we do in such a world of conflicting information, opinions and convictions? As we gather together as a church, many of our brothers and sisters in Christ will represent these differing views. This presents dangers: one being the culture of division, shouting our opinions the loudest, and identifying people with labels or “isms” permeating the church. This is not how we are to be known. Can we have political viewpoints, freely share opinions or convictions, engage in social contexts and have our views heard? Is it okay to be passionate about such things and be a Christian? Yes, but they must not compete with or come close to eclipsing our identity in Christ and our witness to the lost. As believers in Christ, are we allowing our thoughts and actions to be fueled by the love of Christ? What do we do in times like these as a church? We must think biblically and act biblically. This will lead us to 3 things.

## 1. Prayer

*1 Timothy 2:1-4 "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."*

We need to pray for our leaders, for their salvation and wisdom, not out of compulsion but because Christ showed us this as He sought the Father in prayer faithfully. If we truly want to be obedient to Him, we should also have this desire. Our trust and hope must be in the sovereignty of God and His Will, not in our own strength and abilities. Are we spending as much time committing all things to God in prayer as we are stating our viewpoints (or letting them occupy our mind)?

As Canadians, are we praying our national anthem as much as we hear it sung?

“God keep our land glorious and free!”

Is our most significant conviction and motivation in what we do and share that all people will be saved by coming to a knowledge of the truth of Christ?

## 2. Humility

**“Humility is the displacement of self by the enthronement of God.”**

- Andrew Murray, Humility: The Journey Toward Holiness

### **Romans 12:2-3**

*Do not be conformed to this world,<sup>c</sup> but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.<sup>d</sup> For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*

Prayer itself is an act of humility. It allows us to humble ourselves under God and be directed by Him. Whenever we seek Christ and our actions are genuinely led by Him, He is glorified and at work through us.

### **Psalm 32:8**

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

As individual sons and daughters of Christ who make up the church, are we personally seeking the Lord individually and collectively by spending time in prayer? Are we seeking to have our minds renewed day by day to discern what God’s will is for our lives? Are we ensuring we are not thinking too highly of ourselves and our own opinions? Are we seeking answers in God’s Word? If this is the case, God will instruct us how we should go and counsel us with His eye upon us. Through prayer and humility, we will be led by God’s Spirit.

### **3. Unity**

Differing Convictions Should not result in Disunity in the body.

Praying humble believers can be led to differing personal convictions, while having a right heart before The Lord. Selah!

As the church, some of you may expect us as elders to either support or condone the Freedom Convoy. Does our church endorse and align with this protest, or does it condone it? Our culture today tells us we must pick a side and champion it.

Some of us perhaps will feel convinced that this is not living peaceful, quiet lives, that protesting is never an appropriate stance, that causing inconvenience or difficulty in the nation's capital is “un-Christ-like.” As Christians, we should be submitting to authorities.

Others will feel convicted they should participate in a peaceful demonstration that seeks to respectfully voice opinions against government mandates, which have created isolation and division in society. Calling the government to uphold its own Charter of Rights to which it should be bound is an appropriate way for a Christ-follower to respectfully and humbly desire truth, justice, integrity, etc. These are all things that are rooted in Christ-likeness.

Undoubtedly, reading two very brief representations of these convictions will leave some of us wanting to argue, refute and convince that one conviction is proper and one is wrong. Some people in our church have driven to Ottawa to be part of this demonstration; others want nothing to do with it. What do we do as believers when we land on such differing convictions while seeking to honour God? Thankfully, we can take wisdom from God's Word, when Paul dealt with similar scenarios when he wrote to the church in Rome.

Romans 14:1-12

*As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

*One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.*

*Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written,*

*“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,  
and every tongue shall confess to God.”*

*So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

In the early church, these issues were ones that people felt strongly about. They passionately sought to honor The Lord, and their differing convictions were threatening to divide them. Paul had to address it. These were prominent heated topics of discussion for believers.

Church - let each of us, wherever we land on these current issues, be fully convinced in our minds of convictions. Not because we wish to refute others or rally them to our view, but with a convicted heart to honour the Lord in all we are doing.

If we have convictions leading us to action, let us ensure that our beliefs and actions are rooted with a right heart before The Lord in humility. Yes, let us challenge each other as we interact in appropriate settings with grace, patience and humility. But let it not drive us to division or disunity. Our citizenship is in Heaven! A greater love must mark us for Christ and, therefore, greater love for each other. As Jesus himself said:

*John 13:35*

*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

We must realize that the gospel does not need a movement, a mandate or a protest to go forward, and therefore the church of Jesus Christ as a whole need not align with any of these things. Instead, we must stay faithful to our calling, keeping our eyes fixed on Him and living for the purposes He has called us to.

*Colossians 3:12-17*

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*