



“Hobson’s Choice”

The expression “Hobson’s choice” refers to a free choice of one thing only or nothing at all. It originated with Thomas Hobson, a 17th century livery stable owner in Cambridge, England. Hobson offered customers who came to rent a horse the horse in the nearest stall or nothing at all.

This year’s national election presents something of a Hobson’s choice for Christian Americans who desire to cast their vote for a person of honesty and virtue. We have been presented a candidate who in the past eagerly appeared on the cover of *Playboy Magazine*. Recently released video recordings reveal him making obscene comments about women and boasting of lewd behavior. His opponent in this election has done far more than tolerate her husband’s serial predatory treatment of women. She has insulted and intimidated victims of his sexual assaults in an apparent effort to protect her political power. The hypocrisy of one accusing the other of moral turpitude is glaring - the proverbial pot calling the kettle black.

What makes matters worse is the fact that this year’s presidential election actually offers less than a Hobson’s choice. “Nothing at all” is not an option appearing on the ballot. A Christian may console his troubled conscience by not voting, but the net effect will be that one of the two leading party candidates will be elected. To abstain is to fail to oppose the one you believe will adversely affect the country most.

Rather than offer direction about for whom to vote (I do have an opinion), I wish to offer some guidance about what to think when one of these two is elected.

First, as Christians, we do not despair. Too often we look at elections as the means to solving our problems and securing our future. Elections do have consequences. However, nearly every time I have voted for a winning candidate I was left sorely disappointed at

the close of their tenure in office. Only once has a candidate I have opposed been as bad as I feared. The salvation of our nation is not bound up in the person of one candidate or another. Our hope is in God. Regardless of who occupies the White House, our Savior still sits at "the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens" (Heb. 8:1). My trust is in Him.

We need to humbly realize that often the candidates selected for high office mirror a nation's values and affirm its character. In the 1980's, Colorado Senator Gary Hart's presidential run came to an abrupt end when it was revealed publicly that he had been unfaithful to his wife. In contrast to that, a decade later, when it was discovered that President Bill Clinton had engaged in adulterous acts with a White House subordinate, his support remained high. The general argument at that time was that a politician's private life simply did not matter. Apparently, the measure of what was morally acceptable in the lives of leaders of this country had changed. For decades there has been a steady decline in the moral sensibilities of the average American. It should not surprise us that people of base morality are now running for high office. Their morality simply reflects the values of a large segment of the nation they aspire to lead. This testifies to the truth of Scripture, that we live in a sinful world, and that the greatest need is spiritual. The Christian response to the election of low-character leaders ought to be a greater burden, fervent prayer, and a bold witness for Christ. This nation desperately needs the church to be salt and light.

Lastly, we need to remember that God is sovereign. 2500 years ago, the prophet Daniel told Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar, "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Dan. 4:17). Daniel respected the authority of the ruler, but he also warned the ruler about his sin, and reminded him that he ruled under the authority of God. These truths have not changed. Righteousness still exalts and nation, and sin is still a reproach to any people (Pro. 14:34). God remains most high, and his kingdom is forever.