

## The Language of Liberty Series



### **“A Christian Civic Leader’s Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis”**



*By TN Senator Mark Green, M.D.  
Guest Columnist*

As it became clear one of the Paris terror attackers traveled to France as a Syrian refugee, I rushed to social media, made calls, and even wrote letters to oppose Syrian refugees coming to Tennessee. In the wake of this protective stance made by many, I received a Facebook post from an old friend who was a missionary in the organization my wife and I served as associate missionary staff years ago. It was essentially a rebuke for my stand to keep the refugees out of Tennessee. He quoted selected scripture, and suggested I had somehow lost my way. I never second-guessed my decision as I returned to my Bible to answer the question: “How should a Christian resolve the dilemma of giving Christ-like charity while protecting our citizens from attack?”

In the Bible’s Book of Romans – a compilation on the basics of the Christian life, Paul is writing to the members of the Church at Rome. In chapter thirteen he addresses how Christians should interact with government with exceedingly clear text recording God’s expectations of government:

“Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted,

and they will be punished. For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. The authorities are God's servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God's servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience."

As an institution, God expects the government to punish individuals who choose to commit wrong and to honor those who live decently. This highlights two clear purposes God has for government leaders. First, we're to establish an environment that encourages people to adhere to a set of values yielding a good and honorable life and a secure society. Further, the individual gain of a "clear conscience" results as a confirmation.

This passage is equally clear about what a person should expect from government. Thus, the second purpose for government is to restrain evil and protect the innocent. Civil leaders have a responsibility, an expectation to serve as tools of justice in the institutional role of government.

As a Tennessee elected official, one of my critical responsibilities is to protect the citizens of our state, which includes fostering the expectation for civic order and respect of our law.

Temporarily blocking the Syrian refugees from entering Tennessee when the risks are this high is the right response. The federal government has frequently admitted that complete background checks are impossible to conduct on the Syrians who clearly have terrorists hidden among their ranks.

Several relief organizations throughout the Middle East provide medical attention to refugee populations. In fact, one even exists inside Syria's safe areas building schools and providing assistance on the ground. Tennesseans have the ability now to do good by financially supporting those organizations or volunteering to serve. Ample opportunity exists to do good while still protecting our population from those who clearly intend to manipulate this situation to their strategic advantage and commit evil. Who can assert the actions in Paris were not evil?

With the dual responsibility detailed in Romans 13, rest assured I'm a committed partner with Tennessee's other leaders to create an environment that restrains

evil and honors good and decency. In doing so, it allows me, to “keep a clear conscience.”

*Senator Mark Green is a Tennessee State Senator representing the 22nd District and is the president/CEO of Align MD. Dr. Green served as an army special operation flight surgeon assigned to the 160th Special Ops Aviation Regiment and was involved in the mission to capture Saddam Hussein. Dr. Green monitored and interviewed Saddam for 6 hours on the night of his capture, which led to his book "My Night With Saddam". Dr. Green is a graduate of West Point.*

*The Language of Liberty series is a collaborative effort of the Center for Self Governance (CSG) Administrative Team. The authors include administrative staff, selected students, and guest columnists. They may be contacted at [info@tncsg.org](mailto:info@tncsg.org) To learn more, go to [CenterForSelfGovernance.com](http://CenterForSelfGovernance.com).*

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