

Christian Political Considerations

For the last two weeks, we've watched a video in SS called "Letter to the American Church." The video is a warning and wake-up call to the church to take a strong stand against the evil that we see in our world today. If Christians fail to stand against evil, the situation will only get worse. And many of the evils we have to deal with are due to the political situation.

Some people might say that church is no place for a discussion of politics, and that is true in a certain sense. It's not appropriate for me to talk about politics when I should be talking about the Bible. But pastors certainly should talk about those aspects of politics that have moral or biblical significance.

We know that the primary message of the New Testament is the good news about salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Our main message is the Gospel and our focus is largely spiritual. But a significant part of the New Testament teaches us how we should live, how we should function in our world. We must apply theology to practical matters of life. What we believe affects our behavior.

Further, the Bible teaches us about what governments are responsible for and what kind of laws our leaders should implement. The Bible pertains to politics. America was founded by Christians on biblical principles. So we should apply biblical principles to our current situation.

Quote: Even though the church does not have a particular political role, Christians certainly do. The church's business is to instruct the people of God in those moral principles that they must apply in their political decisions. In other words, while churches should not tell their members *whom* to vote for, they should teach them *how* to vote.¹

A very important vote is coming up in November. If Christians fail to exercise their political influence, things will only get worse. If we want things to change, we have to get involved and do what we can do.

So let's consider a few things to keep in mind regarding Christianity and politics.

¹ Kevin Bauder, "Let Me Tell You How to Vote," *In the Nick of Time*, Jan 13, 2012. Some of this message is based on Bauder's article.

- I. God has particular purposes of government.
- A. We could do a deep dive into how God set up the nation of Israel to learn God's purposes for that form of government. However, we don't function under a government like that. We are not a theocracy, and we are not the nation of Israel.
- B. Rom 13:1-7 gives us a broad outline of God's purposes and intentions for government. This passage teaches us several things:
1. .1 God is over government. God is sovereign over who is in power. Those in power have those positions because God put them there.
John 19:11 Jesus [told Pilate], "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. ..."
Even wicked, corrupt leaders like Pilate have their positions because it has been given to them "from above."
 2. .1a We must "be subject unto the higher powers." We must obey the "powers that be." As a general rule, we are supposed to obey those who have authority over us.
 3. .2 If we resist that power, we are resisting God. If we resist the power, we come under judgment. "Damnation" (.2end KJV) is the common word for "judgment." If you want to avoid getting caught up in the judicial system, obey the laws.
 4. .3 Rulers are a "terror to evil." The government ought to be restricting and punishing evil behavior. Criminals ought to be "afraid of the power." Government should impose stern consequences on those who break the law.
 5. .3 Christian citizens should "do that which is good." Generally speaking, we must obey the laws.
 6. .4 The government ought to be protecting and rewarding good behavior.

- a) He is a “minister of God to thee for good.” Government exists for our good. Chaos is the result wherever government is not working—failed states have no working government—e.g., Haiti.
- b) The government “bears the sword,” i.e., has the right to punish criminals, even to the point of capital punishment.

An implication of this is that governments are good to the degree that they protect the good and punish evil. When a government protects criminals and punishes those who keep the law, it loses credibility. We should oppose a government that punishes good and promotes evil.

7. .5 Christians must be subject to legitimate authority. Generally speaking, we do not rebel or participate in revolutions. Only in very extreme cases would be rebel or revolt against the government or the laws of the land.

Protest is OK in certain cases. Cf. Acts 5:29.

8. .6 Christians must pay taxes.

Trans: God’s intent for government is good—to protect law-abiding citizens and to punish criminals. That’s what government ought to focus on. God tells us what government ought to be. We have a standard to measure how well the government is doing. And by that standard, our government is not doing very well in many cases; they are doing the opposite of what they should be doing.

II. The church does *not* have a distinct role within the government.

- A. The local church does not have a political role/agenda. The church’s priority is primarily spiritual. Our commission is to go out into the world, preach the Gospel, make converts, baptize them, and start churches. None of that is political.

- B. We are *not* responsible for fixing society; we are tasked with preaching the Gospel. We influence society by making converts and training them to follow Jesus' commands. We influence society by being salt and light in a dark and dying world. We are trying to save sinners, not to fix all of the problems of society.
 - C. We influence the government by informing Christians about moral and spiritual issues that affect the political situation. We encourage people to act and vote biblically. That's about the most direct connection we have to politics.
 - D. Individual Christians may be involved in politics, but the church as an institution should not make politics the center of attention.
- III. Christians must demand moral decency for those in office.²

Under our political system, we have the privilege of voting for our representatives. Voting is both a privilege and a responsibility that we should take seriously.

What moral issues/principles/values should we focus on when considering whom to vote for?

- A. Consider the candidate's reputation for good personal character.
 - Does the person seem to have basic decency, good character, and a biblical moral compass?
 - 1. The Bible teaches that when the wicked rule, the people mourn (Pr. 29:2). Dishonest officials corrupt the whole system. We don't want to be governed by dishonest crooks.
 - 2. We should want decent, God-fearing people representing us in government, people who promote the good and restrict the bad.
 - 3. Sadly, many of those running for office have a very poor track record for personal integrity and morality. That's true in many cases on both sides of the aisle; many of those in office or running for office are evil, wicked, dishonest, immoral people.

² Some of this is from Bauder's article.

4. Often, elections amount to a choice of the lesser of two evils. Sometimes we have to hold our nose and vote. Sometimes we have to vote for a person with questionable moral character if the alternative is worse. E.g., Trump.
 5. Remember that we are not electing a pastor or a SS teacher; we are electing someone who we hope will support good policies. Normally speaking, God-fearing, decent Christian people will uphold and promote the policies that we would favor. But we have to vote in light of our options and choose the better person.
- B. Consider the candidate's position on life issues.
1. One of the most basic and important responsibilities of government is to protect the lives of the innocent. Civil authorities must use their power to defend those who are too weak to defend themselves. No one is more innocent than the unborn, whom the Bible clearly describes as fully human (Ps. 51:5, 139:14-15).
 2. As Christians, we should support and defend natural human life from womb to the tomb. We should support and defend the lives of those who are still in the womb and those who are near the end of life.
 3. No Christian should vote for any candidate who supports abortion or assisted suicide, no matter what other policies the candidate supports. We should vote only for those who state their commitment to protecting innocent life. This is clearly a biblical issue; this is a moral value.
 4. I have no problem with being a single-issue voter. Other issues are important, but none so important as the right to life. If a candidate is not pro-life, I will not vote for him. I want to choose the candidate who has a *better* position on this issue.

- C. Consider the candidate's position on marriage and family.
 - 1. No Christian should support any candidate or party that seeks to undermine or eradicate traditional Christian family values. Nor should we support anyone who promotes immoral family structures.
 - 2. I'm sure that we are all aware of changes in our society in the realm of home and family. Today, the "normal/natural" home and family seems to be increasingly rare.
 - 3. Many institutions are now actively trying to dismantle the traditional family structure. The natural family is under attack from many directions.
 - 4. The family is the foundation of the country. As the family becomes weaker, the whole country becomes weaker. We should support only those candidates that promote biblical family values.
- D. Consider the candidate's understanding of the Rule of Law.
 - 1. Under our system, government officials are not supposed to be dictators; they must submit to the law, just like everyone else (Ez. 5:13; 6:1-7; Ac. 16:36-38). Everyone should be treated equally under the rule of law. In the United States, the Constitution is the highest law of the land.
 - 2. Christians should support candidates who believe in the rule of law and apply the law equally and fairly to all. Christians should support candidates who will read the Constitution for what it says, not for what they think it should say.
- E. Consider the candidate's position on crime.
 - 1. One of the most important functions of government is to restrain and punish criminals (Rom. 13:3-4). This means that government must protect good citizens and punish law breakers.

2. One of the major problems in our country today is that criminals are not punished justly. They are often arrested and then let go almost immediately — “catch and release.” Many of these criminals keep on committing crimes because of lax and permissive laws. Criminals seem to have more rights than good citizens. E.g., squatters’ rights.
 3. We should demand that our government restrain and punish evil. We should support candidates who promise to be tough on crime and who demand that the laws applies equally to everyone.
- F. Consider a candidate’s position on property rights.
1. God’s moral command—“Thou shalt not steal” (Ex 20:15) establishes property rights. No one has the right to take your property. Few rights are more fundamental than this one.
 2. If you acquired your property legally, then the government should protect your property from theft and from fraud. Government should protect your right to protect yourself, your family, and your property.
- G. Consider the candidates position on personal responsibility.
1. God holds able-bodied people responsible for their own welfare. He expects mature people of every condition to earn their living. If one does not want to work, then he should not expect to eat (2 Th. 3:10).
 2. God has ordained institutions such as family, the government, and the church to support those in genuine need. We can provide a social safety net that helps those who fall into poverty. But there are a lot of people in that safety net who should not be there; they should be working instead of living off government payments.
 3. We should support those who promote personal responsibility and hold people accountable for their actions.

Trans: So our ideal candidates for office would be decent, God-fearing people who are pro-life, uphold and defend Christian family values, believe in the rule of law, are tough on crime, and hold people accountable for their actions. Some candidates have these qualities, but not many.

Sadly, many candidates are just about opposite of these qualities...

As Christians, we must apply biblical principles to the political situation. We vote for those candidates who we hope will promote policies that align with Christian values. We vote for the better candidates.

IV. Options for facing the current situation

Our nation is in very sad shape, and it seems to be getting worse all the time. What are we supposed to do about it? There are several options for engagement in politics:

- A. **Apathy:** Simply ignore what is going on and hope for the best. Don't pay any attention to politics or current events. Focus on other things and let the world go to the devil. Politics is dirty business; just disengage.

This is not a Christian option. If we do nothing, evil people remain in control.

As someone once said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

If we do nothing, evil people and policies will prevail.

- B. **Fortress:** Retreat into a Christian culture where we don't have to deal with evil people and their bad ideas. Establish a Christian fortress or culture where we will not be threatened by the evils of the secular world. Build high walls and keep out the bad guys until we get to heaven or until Jesus returns.

Again, this is not a Christian option. We cannot withdraw into a monastery; we can't build walls around our homes and church. We cannot ignore or neglect the problems we see around us. We must be salt and light in the world; be in the world but not of the world.

- C. Dominion: Some Christians suggest that we must take over the government and the culture and install Christians over everything. Christians should take charge; we must install biblical Christianity as the ruling principle over government; we must make the US a Christian nation; Christianize the culture and the government.

As good as that might sound, it is not a very good idea, and it probably would not work out very well. It's been tried before with very poor results. Christianity is now a small minority position in our country; we are a post-Christian nation, and many pagans in our country today would not tolerate a Christian takeover of the country (absent a true revival).

We'll become a truly Christian nation when Jesus returns. The whole world will be governed by Christian principles when Jesus reigns over the earth. Jesus will fix the social problems that currently plague us. But it won't happen until Jesus returns (contra post-millennialism). We should expect things to get worse until Jesus returns.

- D. Engagement: We are to be good citizens and promote the best interests of our country. We are primarily citizens of heaven, but also citizen of earth. We are strangers and pilgrims here, but we still work for the good of the country in which we live. We must try to preserve what is good and restrict or eliminate what is evil. We acknowledge that politics is not the most important thing, but it is important.

The most significant thing we can do politically is vote for and support good candidates. Our representatives control the government, so we have to vote for the kind of representatives that will support the right policies. If we fail to vote for good candidates, we are asking for evil people to rule over us. If we do nothing, evil will prevail.

At a minimum, we should vote for the better candidates.

Some of us might want to get more involved in politics by running for office and influencing the process from the inside. We need good people to run for office and serve in the government.

Conc.: Our major concern as Christians is to seek first the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of man. Politics is not the most important thing, but it is important.

Each of us should determine which candidates most closely reflect our value system and vote for that person. Vote on the basis of values, not personal preferences or promises the candidates make.

Often we have to hold our noses and vote for someone who is not the perfect candidate if we think that person is better than the alternative. In some cases, we have to vote for someone who will do less harm than the other candidate. If we don't want the alternative, then we must vote for the better guy—or the one who will do the least harm.

We are living in perilous times, and in times like these, we do not have the option of just sitting on the side lines. We must engage and be involved in the process. We must stand up for good and stand strongly against evil. And of course, we must pray for those in office that they would make good decisions.

Ultimately, we know that God has all things under control. The powers that be are ordained by God. They have no power except what God gave them. Even people like Judas, Pontius Pilate, and Caiaphas have a purpose in God's overall plan. God can use the evil activities of wicked people to fulfill his purposes.

Lyrics to the song "This is My Father's World" --

... let me ne'er forget That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet. This is my Father's world: The battle is not done. Jesus who died shall be satisfied, And earth and heaven be one.