

Christians and Politics

Function of government

- We need law, we need government, we need a king – without these we have chaos – even a bad king is preferable to anarchy and lawlessness (Judges 17:6; 2 Thess. 2:3-8)
- To reward virtue (e.g. awards for outstanding service or bravery, the copyright system to reward intellectual achievement) and to punish evil (Romans 13:3)
- For our good (Romans 13:4)
- Instrument of God's wrath (Romans 13:4)

Old Testament

- God's concern for public justice (Psalm 82:2-4;
- The people of Israel sent into Exile for idolatry and injustice
- How are unbelieving governors going to know that they are not ultimately in charge and what God requires of them as His servants?
 - The model of the prophets, speaking truth to power (Moses to John the Baptist)
 - The model of Daniel (Dan. 4:27)

1. Commission – Being clear on the Great Commission – Matthew 28:19-20 – what is the church here for?
2. Confidence – God's sovereignty over all the kingdoms of the earth (Daniel 2:21; 4:17). All authorities are instituted by Him (Romans 13:1). Paul wrote to respect and pray for government yet ended up being killed by them. In all this God was sovereign.
3. Charge –
 - a. Submission to God and government – Matthew 22:17-21; Romans 13:7 – suffering we have in our context is nothing compared to NT times and to what Christians in many other countries experience today
 - b. Servanthood – when we are in positions of leadership in church or society – Mark 10:42-45 – Does the church today have more dictators than the world? E.g. 'prophets' who have unquestionable authority
4. Commitment –
 - a. 1 Timothy 2:1-8; Titus 3:1-2; Romans 13:1,7; 1 Peter 2:13-17 – submission; obedience; taxes; prayers, thanksgiving, intercessions for our authorities; living peaceably; honouring them – How much do we do this in our conversation? If we *do* live like this (submission, gentle, gracious) even when we are persecuted to the point of death, what would that say to the unbelievers and government?
 - b. There is a difference between defending the faith and defending Christian values which are good for society – both important but first is of eternal consequence
5. Citizenship – dual citizenship, two kingdoms – Philippians 3:20-21; John 18:36
 - a. One responsibility is to vote in people who will be a) humble (Dan. 4:17) and b) just (Rom. 13 – promoting virtue, punishing vice), even if they are not Christians.

- b. In a democracy it could be argued that we are all ruling. It is not simply a them (rulers) and us (ruled). So perhaps in a democracy our responsibility is not simply to vote but also to participate in consultations, write letters to MPs and newspapers to promote godliness and fully participate in issues of governance. Some Christians may work particularly closely with or in 'the system' and we should encourage them to stand in this difficult place.
- c. Submissive disobedience – Dan. 3, 6; Acts 4:18-20 – 'You must judge' – this is not secret disobedience hoping not to get caught, this is not selfish disobedience or disrespectful disobedience – this is open, submissive, necessary disobedience where the law conflicts with the clear command of God

Annotated reading list

DeYoung & Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church?* – argue that justice issues are important but not ultimately important – we need to avoid the triumphalism that we are going to radically transform the world because we are not – the mission of the church is the great commission and we need to keep the main thing the main thing

Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How's God's Grace Makes Us Just*

[John MacArthur, 'The Gospel and Politics'](#) – writing into the context of American 'Christian' political activism and lobbying MacArthur argues for a strict focus on the Great Commission

John Piper:

- [Amazing Grace in the life of William Wilberforce \(pdf book\)](#)
- [Peculiar Doctrines, Public Morals, and the Political Welfare: Reflections on the Life and Labor of William Wilberforce \(biographical sketch conference address\)](#)
- [The pleasure of God in public justice \(sermon\)](#)

[Wayne Grudem, *Politics – According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* – reviewed by Justin Taylor](#)

Barnabas Omenda, ['The role of the Church in ethnicity discourse'](#), Research Paper, 2015