

Pastor's Perspective February 2021

What is the role of a (The) Church in the politics of its nation?

Few topics have caused more division and disunity than this one posed by a reader from Nine Mile Falls. Thank you for the question. For the record: I have been an Evangelical minister of the Pentecostal tradition for almost 40 years. This issue is one I have thought long and hard about for all of those years. I do not expect every Christian to agree with my view, but I offer it in light of my best understanding of scripture and history at this time.

First of all, Christians believe that the Bible's truths and principles apply to every area of life, not just about how to get saved and stay out of hell. The Apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:3, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him..." (ESV). A Christian can navigate through "all things that pertain to life" as they continue to grow in their relationship with God and knowledge of his Word. Followers of Christ position themselves to view the issues in this life from a biblical standpoint (i.e., a "Biblical Worldview).

Similarly, when one aligns themselves with Atheism, Buddhism, Islam, Humanism, or Socialism (to name a few other "faiths"), they each adopt a worldview consistent with the core beliefs of that particular "faith." Someone's view on marriage, justice, the unborn, gender, and politics will come from their "faith's" worldview. The point is that one's "faith" determines their worldview, not the other way around.

The Christian Church must realize that those following other faiths (as referenced above) have no qualms about engaging in the political arena. Those "at the table" shape public policy and laws in accordance with their respective worldview. While there are some Christians "at the table" of politics, still, many pastors, congregations, and entire denominations are hesitant to address the issues debated in the political arena for fear of losing church members – (and possibly a by-product of the "Johnson Amendment" that told non-profits they could not endorse candidates and keep their tax-exempt status). Therefore, it should not be a surprise that biblical truths related to marriage, the unborn, gender identity, and the definition of good and evil are disappearing from society and our educational curriculum. In the absence of light, darkness prevails.

This last statement leads us to a bigger question: "What is the overall role of a Christian Church in this world?" Jesus answered that question in Matthew 5:13-16, "You are the salt of the earth... and the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-16). The teachings of Christ and the Apostles have the same preservative effect on society that salt has on stored meat. The presence of the salt preserves the goodness of the meat. Without the salt, the meat decays and rots reasonably quickly, as does a society wherever the "salt" of His truth is not presented. History shows that society's good is preserved and protected from decay when that society embraces these truths.

Switching on a light illuminates every area of a room (not just select corners). Similarly, the “light” of biblical truths will shine into all of society’s sectors, exposing the good and the bad. It is right and necessary to address what is exposed in the light. Politics can be virtuous, as in our nation’s Constitution and the Civil Rights Act. Politics can also be evil, as in Socialism/Communism, whose politics killed over one hundred million souls. The former were the products of men “enlightened” by the principles in God’s Word. The latter came as the product of those who denied the very existence of God.

Today, Christian Pastors and leaders apply the Bible to many of life’s issues, like marriage and family, morality, sexuality, finances, ethics in the workplace, relationships within the community, and so on. Therefore, doesn’t it make sense to bring the principles of God’s Word into the political arena? Not to do so is to withhold the critical salt and light that is so desperately needed in today’s government.

Lastly, engaging in politics is about “Stewardship.” Regarding the U.S. Constitution, James Madison wrote, “All POWER is originally vested in, and consequently derived from, THE PEOPLE.... for the benefit of THE PEOPLE;... That THE PEOPLE have an indubitable, unalienable, and inalienable RIGHT to reform or change their government whenever it be found adverse or inadequate to the purpose of its institution” (emphasis added). In America, political power is delegated to “We the people,” not the politicians (a truth that is fading quickly). As followers of Christ, it behooves us to be the best stewards of this political power purchased by the priceless blood of countless brave Americans. How will our children’s generation judge the manner of our stewardship of this priceless gift – this “indubitable” political right and power?

Moreover, America owes its existence and longevity to brave men who mixed their faith with their politics. As already stated, the two most enduring and astonishing political documents, the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution were the direct products of a majority of followers of Christ (the Church) who found no conflict with applying their faith to their politics. Their faith shaped and established this nation – and aren’t we glad they got involved in politics?

Today, the God-given rights and principles expressed in these documents are at significant risk of being lost to us as a nation. As large segments of the Christian Church keep their salt in the shaker and their lamp under a bowl, our society’s current trend will continue. Today’s Christian Church needs to have ongoing prayer for our nation, our leaders, and for ways to stand and engage in this world. Thank God for those believers who are engaging politically, as did our foundering fathers. For the sake of our children’s generation, I pray that more will get engaged. I also pray that it is not too late.