

Many of us understand that we need to serve others with love and compassion, but the question remains: Is politics an area where we need to also serve people?

Many Christians will say that Jesus wasn't involved in politics. He also did not tell His followers to join any specific political party or movement.

But if we look at Jesus Christ's stand in His day, we will see that He took quite an extreme political position. He basically challenged the existing order by announcing a new government – that is the Kingdom of God – and He Himself as head of it.

At the time of Jesus, the Jews were living under the government of the Roman Empire. People could worship the gods of their choice, so long as they also worshiped the Roman Caesar, who was seen as their god.

Refusing to worship Caesar (the Emperor) was seen as an act of treason, which was punishable by death. That is why so many early Christians were persecuted by the Roman State, not because they were involved in various religions, but because the Roman authorities saw their religion as a threat to the state.

The official religion of the day was Emperor worship, this meant that it was a political offence to not worship the Roman state. Christians were burned at the stake and eaten by wild animals because it was perceived that they were involved in crimes of treason.

Jesus Christ stated that He, and not Caesar, had all authority in heaven and earth. His disciples understood that God's Laws took precedence over Caesar's laws. In other words, He challenged the political and spiritual authority of the most powerful government in the world at that time.

Jesus told us to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God the things which are God's. The Bible makes it very clear that when man's law violates God's Law, then we are to obey God rather than man. And we see the disciples doing this in Acts Chapter 5.

Let's imagine somebody, with the name of David, living under the Mao Tse Tung regime of Red China. This young man, who is a carpenter, living under this Marxist dictator, comes and tells Mao that he is God and not Mao or the state.

Further, he tells Mao that he is the way, and not the state or the party. He also goes and tells his followers that they need to disobey the laws of Red China if it conflicts with his 10 commandments.

How do you think this person would be accepted in China? Would he be perceived as a dangerous political revolutionary or just as a non-conformist?

We know that Jesus' disciples did not get involved in politics, but that was because Rome was not a democratic country. Political involvement, as we know it today, did not exist. We know that Jesus Christ proposed a higher Law and a new King, Himself, and the Christians of His day were prepared to sacrifice their lives for Him.

Many people think that the early church used to "just preach the Gospel", which they think is very good and not political. However, the word "Gospel" in the day of Caesar, referred to Caesar's speeches and authoritative decrees. It should be obvious that Jesus, and the early church, challenged the political and religious people of their times, but the question still remains if God expects us to become involved in politics today?

What do we mean by the word 'political'? Well, in today's life, we see this as the practice of governments in the civil arena; politics usually refers to involvement and influencing those who govern.

If we are going to fulfill God's purpose in ministering to people's needs, then surely this means that we are going to have to deal with social problems.

How can we implement God's Word and demonstrate love for the poor if we do not get involved in politics? How do we take care of the poor, the widows and the orphans, without being involved in politics?

At the very least, we play an indirect role in being involved in politics by voting at the national and local elections. It is very important to influence government officials because the poor are usually impacted first by changes in the economy, and these changes are generally brought about by new laws and policies as passed by government.

God has also commanded us to liberate the oppressed. We often find that the greatest agents of oppression in the world are secular humanist and authoritarian governments. Wouldn't it be an effective way of liberating the oppressed by influencing those governments to pass laws that can help rather than exploit these people?

Government policies can play a role in protecting unborn babies, who are murdered by abortion. Through political laws a country can protect women and children from the exploitative industry of pornography. Sex and violence on television, women being viewed as sex objects and abused and raped can be corrected by the passing of godly laws.

Governments govern people, they will decide if we are going to live as free people or oppressed people. They will also, by their laws, decide on how we are going to worship God – whether it be freely or under persecution. They will also set the standard of morality by the laws that are enforced. The question is – by what standard are they going to govern?

The following four verses help us to understand what God expects from Government:

***A wicked ruler is as dangerous to the poor as a lion or bear attacking them – Proverbs 28:15***

***With good men in authority people rejoice, but with the wicked in power, they groan –***

### ***Proverbs 29:2***

***When rulers are wicked their people are too, but good men will live to see the tyrants downfall – Proverbs 29:16***

***Where there is ignorance of God, the people run wild, but what a wonderful thing it is for a nation to know and keep His laws – Proverbs 29:18***

While the institution of government is ordained of God, it is obvious that God does not approve of all governments. It should be obvious that God did not approve of Hitler, Stalin, Mao or Idi Amin or any other bloodthirsty dictator in history. Governments must live and rule according to God's purpose, they need to protect the innocent, punish the guilty and preserve the peace, so that we can live peaceful and godly lives in our country.

When God's Law comes into conflict with man's law, then we as Christians need to obey God's Law above man's law. And, this might also mean that we need to physically resist the wicked when they oppose the Law given to us by God.

In 1 Timothy 2:1-4 we are instructed to pray for God's wisdom and for direction for our leaders so that we might **"live peaceable and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Saviour who wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth."**

We know that the function God has given government is the dispensing of justice and the restraining of evil (Romans 13:1-4).

For God to demonstrate His justice in government, He uses godly men and women in government, to do His will.

***Evil men don't understand the importance of justice, but those who follow the Lord are much concerned about it – Proverbs 28:5.***

***A good man knows the poor man's rights, the godless don't care. – Proverbs 29:7.***

We need godly men and women in positions of authority, so that we may have a peaceful, just and moral society for the people of South Africa to live in. If the moral, righteous people of our country do not take their responsibility in government, then we leave the doors open for our nation to be governed by the wicked and immoral.

We need to defend those who can't defend themselves (Proverbs 31:8). We are to give fair judgment to the poor, the afflicted and the orphans. How can this be done in a society, when Christians remain outside the areas of politics and justice?

Christians were told by the Apostles that they must not sue each other in secular courts, but that they needed to go to the church elders to settle their civil disputes. The Roman governors of the day began to appoint the early church Bishops to positions as judges, because of their reputation for integrity and high moral ethics. Rome became very insecure because their court systems became corrupt and the only way to correct this was for the Roman authorities to appoint godly men as the administrators of justice.

In England, we saw statesmen, like William Wilberforce – who led the fight to abolish slavery. Christians such as Lord Shaftsbury were also involved with correcting child labour abuses. Christians brought about reform to insane asylums, they worked in prisons and have had a great impact on every level of society.

Christians established thousands of missions around the world including orphanages, schools, hospitals and medical clinics. Christians have led the way in bringing literacy and modern sanitation to multiplied millions of people around the world. All these reforms were brought about by social action of godly men. Many leaders in Africa received their basic education from missionaries and church schools. (It is very unfortunate that, although the Christians taught these people to read, the Marxists and Atheists gave them something to read.) We, as Christians, need to be represented in government. Here are some simple ways of you getting involved in the process.

1. Christians need to **pray** every day for South Africa and its leaders.

2. We need to **register to vote**.

3. We need to be **informed** regarding where the various parties stand on moral/Biblical issues.

4. We need to **select, elect and actively support godly men and women**, who are prepared to stand for public office.

5. We need to **vote** on every Election Day – whether municipal or national.

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