

Should Christians be Involved in Politics?

By Stephen M. Golden
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Recently, I've been hearing Christian brothers and sisters saying things like "It's not a responsibility of Christians to be involved in politics," "Scriptures do not indicate Christians should be involved in politics," and "I think Christians should be about spreading the Gospel instead of being involved in politics."

But can a case be made for Christians to be involved in politics? I think so. Jesus said we are to render to Caesar what is Caesar's.

Matthew 22:21b

Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

(also Mark 12:17 and Luke 20:25)

In addition to saying people ought to pay taxes if taxes are due, as well as contribute to Godly work, Jesus is saying, that in as much as it is consistent with God's law, *be good citizens*. In our country, giving to Caesar does not stop at paying taxes. It means we are to do what good citizens are expected to do so we may be above reproach.

Romans 13:1-7

13:1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Again, the underlying theme is to be good citizens in whatever country you reside. In Jesus' time, there was no country in which the people *were* the government. It was outside of the experience of the people of the time to have the level of government involvement we have available to us today. For that reason it is unrealistic for us to expect Jesus to have said, "Get involved in Government. Promote Godly causes throughout your community, city, state, and the nation."

However, to be a good citizen, you must be somewhat involved in politics. For Christians, this means you should at least understand the issues well enough to promote Godly action in accordance with morality and righteousness. This is

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sufficient scriptural justification to expect Christians to get involved in politics in the United States.

The Scripture says we are to submit to the governing authorities. But *we* are responsible for electing our governing authorities. We choose who will lead us; we vote them in and out of office; they are *our* servants. If we aren't active in the process of choosing Godly people into these positions based on their stand on Godly principles, we are not performing our scriptural duty; it cannot possibly be pleasing to God. We therefore must be aware and understand the issues of the day and what the candidates believe about these issues in order to elect Godly people. We should also explain to others why they should also vote in ways that are pleasing to God. This can go hand-in-hand with spreading the Gospel.

To my knowledge, the United States is the *only* country in which the people *are* the government. There are no Kings or Queens, Pharaohs, Caesars, or even a House of Lords. Leaders are not from a line of royal families, or selected from pedigreed individuals. This is the *only* country in the world in which such a government has ever existed. In fact, shortly after it was established, our government was called "The Great Experiment" by foreign statesmen. Other governments exist today which have adopted some of the principles on which the United States were founded, but only the government of the United States was founded under the principle that our rights are God-given and not government-given. Our rights are therefore inalienable. In addition, we choose our leaders from among ourselves. We give them their authority. Therefore, any scripture that mentions the government covers us on both ends, as being under the authority of the government and being the government. Any scripture text that mentions the government is talking about us. If we are the government, do you not think God has placed us in that position? (Rom. 13:1-7) Do you not think it is our obligation to do God's will as the "government of the people, by the people, and for the people"¹ and to govern to the best of our ability?

As a result, Christians in the U.S do have an additional burden—a responsibility—not placed on Christians in other countries. The fact that we have let the ungodly take so much of our national Godly heritage away is lamentable.

John Adams said, "We have no government armed in power capable of contending in human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other." He's saying that our government is only possible if people are led by Godly morals. It's no wonder many politicians today are trying to remove the Constitution as our source of government. The farther we go from Godliness, the less likely it is our form of government will survive. Nevertheless, implicit in Mr. Adams' statement is the requirement that moral and religious people be involved in the government.

¹ Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address

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Matthew 5:13-16

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Part of letting our light shine is being Godly people involved in our government. "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."²

Peter tells us

1 Peter 2:13-14

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

Even this passage can be viewed as relevant to the subject. We will be commended for doing right. Being a good citizen is doing right. It is part of our civic duty. Also, what I said previously about electing our governing authorities and selecting Godly people applies here as well.

There are many responsibilities for a citizen. One is to defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States.³ You cannot do this if you are not aware of and participating in the discussion of issues facing the community. Performing our civic duty is part of "giving to Caesar what is Caesar's." In our country, among other things, this includes serving on jury duty as well as getting involved in the political issues of the day.

So, while there are no scriptures that say, "Brethren, be involved in politics and do your best to insert Godly principles into the resolution of social issues of the day," the scriptures God *has* given us should be sufficient to compel us to be active in the decisions being made by our government in order to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world in these United States of America.

² Often attributed to Edmund Burke

³ <http://www.uscis.gov/files/article/chapter2.pdf>