

Thinking Biblically About Political Involvement

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[0 : 00] Why don't you listen carefully to this question? Think it through. Don't answer out loud. But do you think that all people should be held to the same biblical standards of right and wrong, good and evil, morality and immorality?

Think about it. Should all people throughout the world, regardless of what they believe or even if they believe, should they be held to the same biblical standards of right and wrong?

And why would you say whatever it is that you would say? Well, the overwhelming majority of people who are unbelievers would answer that absolutely not, and they'd give a list of reasons why they would say absolutely not.

Many would say there's no one standard of right and wrong for everyone in life. They would say things like, what may be right for you is not right for me.

What you say is wrong may not be wrong for me. It's the common way of explaining all points, all views are equally valid today.

[1 : 17] People who would be more gracious may say, well, if it works for you, then fine. That's good. But I believe everyone, deep down, should just follow their heart.

You've heard that. I hope you've not said that. You hadn't thought it through if you said that. Now, the overwhelming majority of Christians should say, yes, it is absolutely right, that all people will be held accountable to the same biblical standards.

And can you explain why? Can you give a reason for saying yes? Well, that's what I want us to do first. I want us to answer the question, why are all people held accountable to the same biblical standards of right and wrong, good and evil?

I want to sort of summarize it. First, God created this world. You know that. We have looked at that. You just know that because most of you in this room, you are faithful Christians, you've studied God's word, but look at it.

The very first sentence of the Bible, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And the rest of the first chapter of Genesis, Genesis, sort of gives us a step-by-step process of when God made what.

[2 : 45] As you move on into Genesis 1, you come to the real climax of creation, the creation of human beings. And we've looked at that in several different messages over the last month, thinking about socialism and so forth.

But look at it, just one verse, Genesis 127. So God created man in His own image, and the image of God, He created him. Male and female, He created them.

God is the creator of everything that exists. Therefore, the entire creation, all people, all things belong to God.

Look next. God reigns, rules, supremely over His creation. God is actively involved in what He's created, this world, our lives.

He is actively guiding all things according to His purpose, His plan, His will, and He's doing it for His glory. The Bible is filled with references, both Old and New Testament, on how God is involved in this world and in our lives.

[3 : 56] Directing things, governing His creation. Here's one of the most comprehensive statements about how God is working out His purpose in this world and in our lives.

Look at it. In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

God is working in all things in this world, all things in creation according to, as it says here, the counsel of His will, His plan, His purpose.

Now, this next statement shows us how God has made each of us specifically as we are. Look at this.

It's from Psalm 119. For you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. You are not an accident.

[4 : 56] You are you by God's design. The height you are. With the abilities that you have. With the ability to develop some things that maybe you didn't have or weren't naturally gifted with.

God created you to be you. Now, the reason why all people are held to the same standards is because everyone has been created uniquely by God, in the image of God, to live in a world governed by God according to God's will.

Look at that on the screen and think about that. As a result of how God has created us like this, everyone possesses at least some basic knowledge of who God is, that there is a God, and everyone possesses at least some basic understanding of His moral standards, right and wrong generally.

What's revealed in the Bible about right and wrong. Let me give you some examples. Paul describes how all people have some understanding of God in Romans chapter 1.

In Romans chapter 1, beginning in verse 18, through chapter 3, verse 19, Paul describes how all people have sinned and come short of God's glory, God's expectations, how all people are sinners in need of a Savior.

[6 : 35] And as he begins that in Romans 1, verses 19 and 20, he talks about how everybody has some concept of God. Look at it. For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them for His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made, so they're without excuse.

Paul is saying that as you live in this world and you look around at creation, the complexity, the orderliness, there has to be some grand plan.

There has to be an ultimate designer. There has to be some kind of divine power, at least. There has to be some concept of God.

Not as we know God revealed throughout Scripture, but there is just, by living in this world, enough awareness of the existence of God, Paul says, that everybody is accountable to God.

People who reject what they know about God, they're without excuse. They're sinners under the condemnation of death because they've rejected what they did know about God.

[8 : 00] Look on in chapter 2. Paul describes how all people have some basic understanding of right and wrong as revealed in Scripture, even if they have never heard of Scripture.

They've never read it. They've never had it read to them. Look at this. He says, For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.

They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness. What Paul is saying is, human beings created in the image of God, we have this innate sense of basic morality, basic right and wrong.

We have a conscience. That's what he's talking about. Now, here's an example of how all people possess a basic understanding of God's standards of right and wrong.

If someone breaks into an unbeliever's house, if someone breaks into an atheist's house and steals his money or his computer or his TV, he or she is going to call the police with the expectation that the police are going to try to find this person, and if they find this person, this thief, they're going to arrest him.

[9 : 27] They're going to put him in jail, and hopefully, they'll get their property back. Every atheist knows what every Christian knows. There's a universal standard of right and wrong.

What is mine is mine and not yours. Theft. There's just something within us that tells us it is unjust for you to take, steal, that which is mine.

Everyone understands that. Now, stealing is a violation of God's revealed law in Scripture.

It is a violation of the basic concept of justice that is written in the heart of every human being.

That's why every normal person in this country, black or white, rich or poor, knows that rioting and looting is morally wrong.

It can never be excused as anything other than unlawful and sinful. I say every normal person because there are people who are trying to deny that what's happening is rioting, looting, anarchy,

lawlessness.

[11 : 00] Some of them want to just let it go until it gets close to home. the liberal mayor of Chicago at first closed her eyes to the anarchy that was taking place in her city until they got close to her house and then she calls out the police, the bad guys according to her, to come and defend her property and her life against those who are rioting, looting and sometimes murdering innocent people.

Put it another way, if our non-Christian neighbor steals from us, we're not going to excuse their behavior because they didn't know the eighth commandment, do not steal.

I'm going to say there's not a person in this room who does not expect, if you've got an unsaved neighbor, you expect that unsaved neighbor to not steal your stuff.

You expect that neighbor to follow the commandment, do not steal, whether they've heard it or not because you know it's just something that we know in our conscience.

It's wrong to steal. And if that neighbor does steal from us, we're going to consider him or her a lawbreaker and we're going to consider it right for him or her to be punished for breaking this law even if they've never heard of that eighth commandment, do not steal.

[12 : 58] The Bible makes it clear that the moral standards of God, the standards revealed in the Bible are the moral standards of all people.

They're the moral standards that all people are going to be judged by on the day of judgment. Peter makes this clear in his first letter in our New Testament. First Peter was written to encourage Christians who were being persecuted.

Peter was writing to Christians living in a hostile environment. At one point he told them that the non-Christians around them, look at this, are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery and they malign you, but they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Peter's saying the people around you, they don't understand why you don't join them in living an ungodly life. While you're not drunk, being sexually impure, taking advantage of people, things like that.

They don't understand it. But Paul says they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead for the way that they are living. This shows us that even unbelievers will stand before God and be judged based on God's moral standards that we see revealed in scripture, but on the basic level are written in our hearts.

[14 : 35] God has only one standard. He has revealed it in his word. He has put it on our conscience, written it on our heart, and we are responsible. All people are responsible.

The book of Acts tells us that Paul believed the same thing, taught the same thing. The book of Acts tells us in chapter 17 about Paul's encounter with unbelieving Greek philosophers in Athens.

Look at it. He told them that the God who made the world and everything in it, verse 24, also commands all people everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

Now Paul was speaking to people. Who didn't believe in the authority of the Bible if they even knew what the Bible taught? They didn't care. They didn't know about Jesus or what they did know.

They certainly did not believe that he was the son of God. They didn't believe in the idea of his dying on the cross for their sins and they certainly didn't believe in a resurrection.

[15 : 49] But Paul made it clear that God will judge all people according to his righteous standards which are revealed in scripture and God will judge all people by Jesus Christ.

Wayne Grudem has described things like this, all of this kind of stuff in great detail in his book, Politics According to the Bible. And then he makes this application.

Look at this. This truth has significant implications for how Christians understand political questions that involve right and wrong. For example, if God says that murder is wrong, Exodus 20, 13, and if it is determined that the command to not murder applies to pre-born children and to those who are elderly or very ill, it clearly affects how one views laws regarding abortion and euthanasia.

Seven weeks from today, or seven weeks from Tuesday, rather, Americans will go to the polls to elect a president, United States senators, and House of Representatives members who will determine laws and policies of right and wrong.

The Bible addresses many of those questions of right and wrong as it addresses issues related to abortion, racism, homosexuality, religious liberty, as we've seen in the past few weeks, socialism. [17:33] Now, Democrats and Republicans, according to their own platforms, have very different answers to the questions of those issues.

We as Christians have a responsibility to evaluate how each candidate answers those questions in light of what the Bible teaches. And then it's our responsibility to vote for the candidates whose answers are more closely aligned with the teaching of Scripture.

Now, I know that some Christians think that political matters should not ever be brought up in church. Such Christians are wrong to think that.

And I want to show you why. Number two, question number two this morning. Why should Christians be involved in the political process in our country? Well, throughout the Bible, we see God's people involved in what we would call politics or governmental affairs.

I want to give you one example that's well known from the prophet Daniel's life. Daniel's one of the most, one of the, a lot of Christians' favorite Old Testament persons.

[18:56] I want you to look at how Daniel spoke to King Nebuchadnezzar. Look at this. He said, therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you.

Break off your sins by practicing righteousness and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.

Now, you can imagine Daniel took a risk to say that to an unbelieving king. But Daniel was committed to faithfully upholding God's moral standards even to an unbelieving secular leader who had power over him, over his life and death.

Daniel knew, he understood that God holds all people accountable for living by his moral standards even though Nebuchadnezzar had not been brought up, had not been taught these things other than what Daniel and maybe some other Jews had taught him.

The prophet Jeremiah told the Jewish people who were in exile in Babylon, seek the welfare of that city. Now, let me back up a moment.

[20:16] Daniel was taken as a boy from his home as a captive prisoner of war to Babylonia. And he did not compromise what he believed.

You can read about that in Daniel. The first few chapters, he stood firmly in who he was, what he believed, being a man of God. And God blessed his faithfulness.

He became an officer in the government of a pagan power. And he spoke the word of God. He held that king accountable to live according to the truth of God's word.

Well, Jeremiah told the Jewish people who had also been taken captive, taken as prisoners of war far from their homeland. He told them, look at this, seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile.

Think about this. The Babylonians defeated the nation of Judah. God's chosen people took those people, many of them into captivity.

[21:25] The scripture says, I have sent you into exile. God said that. God is sovereign. God's in control. God used the Babylonians to punish his unfaithful people.

That's what happened. But look at it. Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

If the Jewish people were going to seek the welfare of the city, they needed to be involved in everything they could possibly be involved in, didn't they?

They needed to influence the leaders of the city to the best of their ability even though they had no opportunity to vote. They couldn't say a whole lot or at least they wouldn't be heard a whole lot. But Jeremiah, God spoke through him and told them, you seek the welfare of this city. Note two specific things about this. They were to pray for the welfare of everyone, even those unbelievers who had taken them captive, their enemies.

[22:37] But what it says here, they would find that as the city prospered, they would prosper. No matter what we think about what's going on in our country today, we must never give up.

We, as Christians, we need to pray. We need to do all that we can, work for the welfare of our country, our state, our county.

And as the country prospers, we will prosper. Just like God told the people, His chosen people, living in exile.

Wayne Grudem says that this includes our political involvement. But look at this. The true welfare of such a city will be advanced through governmental laws and policies that are consistent with God's teachings in the Bible, not by those that are contrary to the Bible's teaching.

Being actively involved in influencing this world is our Christian responsibility. Jesus clearly stated that He expects us His followers to be living in the world, making a difference, having influence, having an impact.

[23 : 57] Look at how He said this. We're to be like salt, having a preserving effect, preserving what we can that is good and right.

Having a flavoring on our community. Look at what Jesus said. You're the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?

It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. When Jesus said, you're the salt of the earth, what does He focus on? He talked about, He's focusing on here, if we don't do that, we're useless.

He's trying from a backhanded sort of way to say, get involved. Be involved in your community. Be involved in this world. Preserve flavor, influence.

Then He also said we're to be like light, shining light, the light of the gospel, the light of the truth of God on our community. Look at this. You're the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand.

[25 : 06] And it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

We are supposed to be in this county, wherever we go. We're supposed to be agents of God's grace and truth.

We're supposed to have this kind of influence in our schools, in our businesses, and in government. And one of the ways we accomplish this in government is by voting according to the truth of Scripture on the issues that are addressed in Scripture.

All issues are not addressed in Scripture. And next week, we're going to come back and look at some of the issues addressed in Scripture and see how the platforms of the Republican and Democratic parties line up with the principles of God's Word.

[26 : 09] But before we do that, we must be convinced that the teaching of Scripture has universal application. Do you understand that the moral standards of God, the moral standards that God has revealed in His Word, are the moral standards that all people will be judged by?

That we will be judged by? You know, if we are truly Christians, born again by the Spirit of God, have true saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the penalty for our sins has been paid.

That's been determined. Heaven is our home, as I'll point out in just a moment. But we will be judged by the way that we've lived in this world, our works, and that will have something to do with our reward in heaven.

It matters how we live now and on judgment day. And by the way, our works, according to the New Testament, according to James in a big way, our works show the reality of our faith.

James will tell us, if there is no evidence that we are Christians by the way that we live, in relationship to God, in relationship to one another, we shouldn't have assurance of salvation.

[27 : 53] But going back to this, are you seeking right now as a Christian, trusting in Jesus Christ and Him alone for your salvation, or are you seeking to live by the moral standards that God has revealed in His Word?

Let me ask you this. When you have to make moral or ethical decisions, do you first think about, if you already know, or look, study, and try to figure out what does the Bible say about this?

When you have to make a moral or ethical decision that involves you or your family or some matter of business, do you seek God's guidance based on what He has revealed already in His Word?

Sometimes that's hard to do. I'm talking about sometimes it's hard to put it into practice. Sometimes it might cost us more financially or time-wise.

But let me ask you this. Are you so convinced that God's Word is true, His standards are right, that when it comes to making a decision, you're going to be faithful to God, you're going to do His will, even if it costs you a lot of money, even if it costs you a lot of time, even if it inconveniences you?

[29 : 27] Are you convinced that God's Word reveals the moral standards by which all people are going to be judged, including yourself?

Are you seeking to understand what they are personally? Are you seeking to obey them, no matter what anybody else may say or think?

One final thought. Our absolute loyalty and unwavering commitment must never be to our country or to a political party or to any leader.

Our absolute loyalty, unwavering commitment must be to Jesus Christ first and foremost. Let's never forget that our ultimate and eternal citizenship is not in this county, this state, or this country, or even this world.

It's in heaven. Look at what Paul writes to the Philippians. But our citizenship is in heaven. Paul talked a lot about and was involved in this world, the affairs of this world, influencing even government.

[30 : 47] But he says, our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.

Don't misunderstand. We need to be involved in the political process. We need to be concerned about what is happening around about us.

But nothing is going to last forever. It is all going away one day. It's all going to be going away or gone when we die.

Tomorrow or whenever that may be. As Christians, we can look forward to living in a new heaven and a new earth where Jesus Christ is Lord and the things of this world, we won't even think of them anymore.

I encourage you. Think biblically about your political involvement. It matters how we live here.

[32 : 06] It matters that we exert Christian influence. It matters that we vote. But this is not an ultimate matter.

Ultimately, we are the children of God who are one day going to leave everything in this world behind and live with Him and the Lord Jesus Christ. Think about that as the ultimate goal of our lives.

Let's pray together. Father, Lord, help us to see now in light of all that we have seen about how you are in control.

You've created everything. Everything is yours. You've given us ultimate standards in your word that apply to everybody, that everybody will be judged by.

Help us to see, Father, how important it is that we exert our influence as Christians who believe your word on our community, state, and country.

[33 : 12] Help us to see that it matters how we vote, the issues that we back. Help us to seek your wisdom in making the right decisions in being involved and then voting seven weeks from Tuesday.

Let's just pray now and listen to the Lord about how we should respond to Him, about how we think, how we speak, and how we act concerning these matters.

Make your word