

= “the difference between (1) what is right in *principle* and (2) how to do what is right in *practice*. Not everything that *should* be done must be done at this very *moment* or in this particular *circumstance*.” James Baird

- need to understand...
 - the law of God: applying the 10 commandments
 - the craft of government: what’s needed to make things happen?
 - the nature of our people: What would work best in *our* particular context?

Conclusion: what is a right concern for politics / government?

- Danger: you CAN care TOO much about politics/government
- But there is a RIGHT concern:
 - grace redeems nature (it does not destroy it)
e.g. biological families... governments and nations...
- “politics” *polis = city* → the art of living together in community
 - “seek the welfare of the city” (Jer. 29:4-9)
 - Examples
 - exiles... like Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, & Daniel
 - Faithful counsel... personal cost... the truth faith promoted by Gentile kings
 - life in exile requires prophetic witness
 - Esther, Joseph
 - pray for and pursue a genuinely Christian government.

Next week: Nation / nationhood / Christian nationalism?

Government – needs power, love and prudence

1 Kings 3:1-15

While waiting to begin

1. What “ingredients” does a politician need to be successful?
2. What would make him/her pleasing in the sight of God?
3. Compare your answers to #1 and #2.

Acknowledgement / resources

- David Thomas, Christ Church Romford
- James Baird, *King of Kings: a reformed guide to Christian government*

Recap

- **Civil government is instituted by GOD** Romans 13:1

- **Therefore**

CHRISTIAN PEOPLE must submit to our rulers Rom. 13:1, 1 Pet. 2:13
... yet sometimes disobey Acts 5:29

GOVERNMENT must obey God & promote the public good

Because...

- The State is God’s servant for the common good Romans 13:4
- All Kings everywhere are called to serve Jesus, promote true religion & true righteousness 1 Sam. 23:3-4, Ps. 2:10-12, Jonah 3:7-9, Rom. 13:4
- False religion destroys a society Romans 1:29-31
- Everything good is built on Christian foundations
- Godliness is an obligation for all people

= **Govern by the Law of the Lord** the 10 commandments

= **Promote Christianity as the true religion**

- By various means
- Promote / tolerate / forbid
- Not preaching the gospel or running the church...
But enabling the church to flourish...
And never promoting false religion
- Cannot compel belief...
Can compel outward behaviour for the common good

"All have confessed that no government can be happily established unless piety is the first concern" John Calvin – 1559

Q: What does Scriptural civil government require?

1. It requires POWER

- Jesus ordained civil government
- Jesus the King possesses all power
- So, political power is a good gift (which can be corrupted)
- It is good for Christians to govern: using power in a godly way, to serve others (e.g. Matthew 22:39)

2. It requires LOVE

- "To follow the way of Jesus, we must use our power to secure for others the goods that we desire for ourselves. In the realm of politics, we should focus on securing particular kinds of goods – namely, public goods. For ourselves, we want peace, prosperity, good order, justice, liberty, and piety (1 Tim. 2:2). Hence, if we want these things for ourselves, then we should use our power to acquire them for others as well." James Baird
- In practice = seeking public goods by
 - voting
 - persuading
 - serving: the vocation of government
 - praying... especially for rulers who will promote Christianity... and for the failure/non-election of rulers who promote false religions

3. It requires PRUDENCE

- political action requires: "*wisdom*, to discern the real interest of the community; *goodness*, to endeavour always to pursue that real interest; and *strength*, or power, to carry this knowledge and intention into action." William Blackstone
- all THREE needed...
- wisdom: e.g. 1 Kings 3... not cowardice... but *prudence*