

Things That Are Hard To Do #3

“Engage in Politics”

Acts 17:1-9

September 2, 2018

Scripture Reading: Acts 17:1-9

Series Setup & Introductory Remarks

Prayer

Introduction

Christians throughout all ages have had to wrestle with this question: how do followers of Jesus engage in politics in a way that is honoring to God, faithful to the Scripture, and loving to our neighbor?

Definition of Politics

- Polis — city
- Politics — how do humans live together in the city?
- Is the gospel “political?” Yes and no
 - Michael Gerson & Peter Wehner — As all human activity—from the mundane to the profound, from personal lives to professional careers—falls under God’s domain, so authentic Christian faith should be relevant to the whole of life; it ought not to be segregated from worldly affairs.

Foundations

1. God is a God of authority | 1 Chronicles 29:11-12
2. God delegates and shares authority | Genesis 1:27-28
3. Human authority should reflect God’s authority | Matthew 20:25-28
4. Government is a common grace | Romans 13:1-7
 - a. G.K. Chesterton — Abolish religion if you like. Throw everything on secular government if you like. But do not be surprised if a machinery that was never meant to do anything but secure external decency and order fails to secure internal honesty and peace.
5. Christians are good for society | Proverbs 11:10-11

Acts Passage

6. The Gospel belongs to all people | Acts 17:1-5, Ephesians 2:13-19
7. Jesus is the King | Acts 17:6-7, Mark 1:14-15, John 18:36
 - a. Death was an enthronement ceremony, his resurrection is his eternal rule
8. Christians live as dual citizens | Acts 17:8-9
9. Christians live as exiles | Jeremiah 29, 1 Peter 1-2
 - a. Michael Gerson & Peter Wehner — This dual citizenship is difficult. Historically, when the faithful have exercised political power, they have sometimes been responsible for oppression and have brought discredit on the faith itself.

Christians have seldom been less appealing than when acting in the name of “Christendom.” But when the faithful have ignored political power, they have sometimes again brought discredit on their ideals. Sins of omission can be as deadly as sins of commission. So the exercise of politics requires walking a tightrope. It is both a temptation and a responsibility; it can act like an addictive drug or a healing medicine.

10. Only the Kingdom of God will last | Revelation 11:15-18

- a. Mark Dever — [Until Christ’s return], his people will be under the reign of all sorts of kings and emperors, as Joseph and Daniel had been in the Old Testament, as Christ himself was. Friends, all such reigns of kings and congresses would be temporary. And Christians are like —by God’s grace— cockroaches: we can survive anything. We are not dependent on just governments for the gospel going forward.

Living It Out

1. Be involved in politics | 1 Timothy 2:1-3
2. Get used to tension
3. Seek to understand
 - a. Scott Sauls — The more like Christ we become, the more his fractured image in us will be restored. The more his fractured image in us is restored, the less we will want to medicate our fractured egos by putting others down and diminishing others’ dignity through gossip, slander, prejudice, and exclusion. And the less we diminish others’ dignity, the more we will want to uphold and affirm and celebrate others’ dignity as Jesus does. And the more we uphold and affirm and celebrate others’ dignity as Jesus does, the less prone we will be to take sides in ways that Jesus does not.

Benediction

Psalm 118 — ⁸It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. ⁹ It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.