

Faithful Politics, Week 2 – Principal Questions & Challenges

Outline

- I. Why is politics so difficult?
 - a. Many of today's most vexing political disputes turn on profound questions with which brilliant thinkers, Christian and non-Christian alike, have been wrestling for millennia:
 - i. What is justice?
 - ii. What is the purpose of government?
 - iii. What limits are there on the government's rightful authority?
 - iv. What is the source and nature of our political obligations?
 - b. In some ways, these questions are especially difficult for Christians.
 - i. Scripture often not only declines to provide simple answers, but also takes simple answers off the table.
 - ii. The history of Christian political thought is in many ways a history of attempts to resolve and work out tensions implicit in Scripture.
- II. An example: the trilemma of injustice
 - a. Scripture tells us that injustice is **S.I.N.**
 - i. **Serious:** Injustice should stir us to action (Psalm 10)
 - ii. **Inescapable:** Injustice is ubiquitous in our fallen world (Rom. 5:12–14)
 - iii. **Non-permanent:** God ultimately will redeem all injustice (Rev. 21:1–5)
 - b. It can be difficult to understand how all three of these ideas can be true at the same time:
 - i. If injustice is going to be redeemed, why care about it now?
 - ii. If injustice is inescapable, why try to do anything about it?
 - c. Yet failing to affirm *all three* of these truths can lead us astray:
 - i. Ignoring injustice's seriousness can lead to apathetic quietism.
 - ii. Ignoring injustice's inescapability can lead to crusading utopianism.
 - iii. Ignoring injustice's non-permanence can lead to despairing cynicism.
- III. How then should Christians approach politics?
 - a. With heart:
 - i. Stoic resignation is not an option for Christians; injustice should move our hearts to feeling and our hands to action.
 - b. With humility:
 - i. Finding right answers to political questions is often extremely difficult; producing good results is even harder.
 - c. With hope:
 - i. Even as sin and foolishness corrupt our efforts, God is gracious to bless them; we labor knowing that victory is already won.

Discussion Questions

1. Which, if any, Scriptural truths about injustice—its seriousness, its inescapability, its non-permanence—are you most prone to deemphasize? How does that affect your approach to politics?
2. What are some contemporary political disputes that implicate the tension in Scripture's description of injustice?