

## The Pulpit and Public Life

A Biblical Framework for Moral Engagement in the Public Square

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### Synopsis: The Pulpit and Public Life

This position paper affirms that Jesus Christ is Lord over every area of life — including government and public policy (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 1:16–18). Because all authority ultimately comes from God (Romans 13:1–4), no sphere of society exists outside His moral standards.

The Church does not belong to any political party, nor does it seek political control. However, it does have a responsibility to speak clearly when moral issues arise. Scripture addresses matters such as the sanctity of life (Genesis 1:27), justice (Micah 6:8), sexual ethics (1 Thessalonians 4:3–7), truthfulness (Proverbs 12:22), and stewardship (Luke 12:48). When these issues intersect with public policy, the Church cannot remain silent.

The paper distinguishes between partisan loyalty and prophetic witness. Throughout Scripture, God’s servants confronted rulers when necessary (2 Samuel 12:7; Acts 24:25). At the same time, the Church rejects political idolatry — placing ultimate hope in parties, leaders, or ideologies rather than in Christ (Exodus 20:3–4; Philippians 3:20).

In summary, the Church does not “bring politics to the pulpit” in a partisan sense. Instead, it brings the moral clarity of Scripture into every area of life, equipping believers to engage public issues thoughtfully, courageously, and humbly (2 Timothy 4:2; Matthew 5:13–16).

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### Opening Statement

“We don’t bring politics to the pulpit. We bring the pulpit to politics.” - Carl Toti

This statement reflects a core Christian belief: Jesus Christ is Lord over everything.

It is not a statement of loyalty to any political party. It is a statement about Christ’s authority. Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). Scripture also teaches that all things were created through Him and for Him (Colossians 1:16–18). “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Psalm 24:1).

Because of this, no area of life — including government — exists outside God’s rule. Civil authority is not morally independent. Romans 13:1–4 teaches that governing authorities are established by God. Daniel 4:17 reminds us that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of men.

To say that politics is outside the reach of Scripture would contradict what the Bible clearly teaches.

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## **I. The Lordship of Christ Over All of Life**

Christianity does not divide life into “sacred” and “secular.” All of reality is under Christ’s authority.

Scripture shows that Christ is Lord over:

- The individual conscience (Romans 14:12)
- The family (Ephesians 5:22–6:4)
- The Church (Ephesians 1:22–23)
- The workplace (Colossians 3:23–24)
- The state (Psalm 2:10–12; Revelation 19:16)

Every authority is temporary and accountable to Him. Jesus told Pilate, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:11). Romans 13:1 teaches the same truth.

When governments make laws, they are making moral decisions. And those decisions are still subject to God’s standards (Isaiah 10:1–2; Micah 6:8).

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## **II. Moral Truth Is Written Into Creation**

The Bible teaches that God has revealed Himself not only through Scripture but also through creation. Psalm 19:1–4 says the heavens declare the glory of God. Romans 1:18–20 teaches that God’s invisible attributes are clearly seen in what has been made.

Romans 2:14–15 explains that even those without the written Law show that God’s law is written on their hearts. Their conscience bears witness.

This means moral truth is not invented by governments. It is discovered. It is rooted in God’s design.

When laws align with God’s created order, they promote justice and human flourishing. When laws violate that order, they contradict both Scripture and the moral reality built into creation.

Public ethics cannot be separated from moral truth.

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### **III. Different Roles, One Moral Standard**

Historic Christian teaching recognizes that God established different areas of authority: the family, the Church, and the state.

Each has a distinct role:

- The Church does not enforce civil punishment (John 18:36).
- The State does not administer the sacraments (Matthew 16:18–19).
- The Family carries responsibility for teaching and raising children (Deuteronomy 6:6–7).

These institutions are different, but they are not independent of God’s authority. Psalm 82:1–4 shows that even rulers are judged by God for injustice.

The Church does not govern the State. But it does have a responsibility to speak truth to it. Paul reasoned with Governor Felix about “righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment” (Acts 24:25).

Separation of roles does not mean separation from moral accountability.

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### **IV. Government’s Purpose and Its Limits**

Scripture teaches that God, in His common grace, preserves order in society. Jesus said that God “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good” (Matthew 5:45). After the flood, God established civil justice to restrain violence (Genesis 9:6).

Romans 13:4 calls governing authority “God’s servant for your good,” meant to punish wrongdoing and promote justice.

The Church recognizes this legitimate role. However, civil authority has limits. When governments promote injustice, oppression, or moral corruption, they step outside their God-given purpose (Proverbs 29:2; Isaiah 1:16–17).

The Church does not seek to control government. It seeks moral clarity within it.

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## **V. Politics Reflects Moral Beliefs**

Politics is not neutral. It reflects a view of right and wrong.

- Laws reflect moral judgments.
- Budgets reveal priorities.
- Policies express values.

The Bible speaks directly to issues that often become political:

- The sanctity of human life (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139:13–16)
- Justice for the vulnerable (Proverbs 31:8–9; James 1:27)
- Sexual ethics (1 Thessalonians 4:3–7)
- Truthfulness (Proverbs 12:22)
- Stewardship and responsibility (Luke 12:48; Micah 6:8)

To suggest that preaching must avoid these subjects once they intersect with public policy creates a boundary Scripture never creates.

The question is not whether morality will shape politics. The question is whether that morality will be shaped by divine revelation or by secular ideology.

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## VI. Prophetic Witness Without Partisan Control

The Church does not belong to a political party. Our ultimate citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

At the same time, Scripture shows God's servants confronting rulers when moral truth was at stake:

- Nathan confronted David (2 Samuel 12:7).
- Elijah confronted Ahab (1 Kings 21:17–19).
- John the Baptist rebuked Herod (Mark 6:18).
- Paul spoke about righteousness and judgment before Felix (Acts 24:25).

These were not party endorsements. They were moral confrontations.

The Church must never become an arm of a political machine.

But it must always preach the Word “in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2).

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## VII. The Danger of Political Idolatry

The first commandment warns against idolatry (Exodus 20:3–4). Idolatry happens when something other than God becomes ultimate.

Politics becomes idolatrous when it becomes our ultimate hope or when party loyalty becomes unquestionable.

Scripture warns against misplaced trust:

- Wealth (Matthew 6:24)
- Power (Mark 10:42–45)
- National pride (Jeremiah 17:5)
- Empty philosophy (Colossians 2:8)

No political system is beyond biblical evaluation.

To shield politics from Scripture would elevate it above God's authority — something the Bible never permits.

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## **VIII. The Pastor's Role in Shaping Conscience**

Pastors are called not only to comfort but to equip believers for maturity (Ephesians 4:11–14).

Christians participate in public life. They vote, serve, enforce laws, and raise families within a legal and cultural framework.

The Church does not tell members which candidate to choose.

But it does form biblically shaped consciences.

If the Church remains silent on public moral issues, believers will be shaped by other worldviews instead (Romans 12:2).

Faithful preaching equips Christians to engage society:

- Intellectually (2 Corinthians 10:5)
  - Morally (Philippians 1:9–11)
  - Courageously (Acts 4:19–20)
  - Humbly (2 Timothy 2:24–25)
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## **IX. Conclusion: The Moral Authority of the Pulpit**

We do not bring partisan politics into the pulpit.

We bring the moral authority of Scripture into every area of life — including politics.

We affirm:

- The Lordship of Christ over all creation (Colossians 1:18).
- The authority of Scripture for both personal and public life (2 Timothy 3:16–17).
- The legitimacy of civil government under God’s authority (Romans 13:1–4).
- The Church’s calling to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16).

We reject:

- Partisan captivity.
- Political idolatry.
- Silence motivated by fear.
- Dividing life into “spiritual” and “non-spiritual” categories.

Truth does not become political simply because it confronts power.

And the Church does not become partisan simply because it refuses to be silent.