

Psalm 82

Sec 2. “It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto”

- A. This statement is contrary to what I first heard when attending a Reformed, Presbyterian church.
1. I heard a minister say that for a Christian to go into political office, especially at the national level was to inevitably lead to that person’s corruption.
 - a. This minister’s statement has a element of prophetic absolutism to it.
 - b. It is also contrary to the WCF: “It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto.”
 2. The real danger of Christians being involved in some political circles is found in **1 Cor 15:33: “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’”**
 - a. Surely this may not be calling for one who is immature in faith or susceptible to change.
 - b. In the mind of some Christians, having to move & live in Washington, D.C. would be the worst possible place to live.

In sec 2, speaking of Christians who are lawfully called to serve as a magistrates: “in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth;” Lets look at each of these areas that a Christian civil ruler ought to maintain:

A. Piety:

1. A person with “piety” has a true and sincere faith.
2. **2 Samuel 23:2** “The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me: ‘He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.’” (NKJV)
 - a. It is right and fitting for chaplains to serve various branches of government.
 - b. We might not prefer those appointed to particular offices; however, spiritual revival should include a revival of faithful, God-fearing chaplains in these offices.
3. Civil rulers ought to have such piety themselves yet this section says that they ought to make an influence for public piety “according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth.”

B. Justice:

1. Speaking of magistrates, **Rom 13:4** says “It is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.”
2. **Micah 6:8**: “He has told you, O man, what is good; & what does the Lord require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, & to walk humbly with your God?”
3. → **Ps 82:1-4**

C. Peace:

1. → Turn to **1 Tim 2:1-8**.
 - a. We should pray for all those in authority. For many of them, we should pray that they **“come to the knowledge of the truth” (v4)**.
 - b. The fulfillment of such prayers is peace & freedom for the church to worship: **“so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (2b)**.
2. Civil rulers, military, & police are not the only applications when Jesus said, **“Blessed are the peacemakers” (Mat 5:9)**; however, such callings can and do fit that description.
3. It is absolutely essential that civil rulers maintain the freedom for God’s Word to be taught and preached freely. **Phil 4:6-7** says that the ultimate peace of God can only come through Jesus:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

D. Regarding the 6th commandment, **“Thou shall not murder,”** John Calvin wrote “...since the Lord has bound the whole human race by a kind of unity, the safety of all ought to be considered as entrusted to each. In general, therefore, all violence and injustice, and every kind of harm from which our neighbour’s body suffers, is prohibited. Accordingly, we are required faithfully to do what in us lies to defend the life of our neighbour; to promote whatever tends to his tranquility, to be vigilant in warding off harm, and, when danger comes, to assist in removing it.”¹

1. This speaks to the pursuit of both justice and peace.
2. There are things each of us can do to carry out this mandate given by John Calvin; however, the calling of civil magistrate is one that is especially geared toward restraining violence & injustice.

Sec 2 closes by saying “...so, for that end [maintaining piety, peace, & justice], they [civil rulers] may lawfully, now under the new testament, wage war, upon just and necessary occasion.”

1. St. Augustine was the first Christian to write about just wars. In the *City of God*, he wrote: “They who have waged war in obedience to the divine command, or in conformity with His laws, have represented in their persons the public justice or the wisdom of government, and in this capacity have put to death wicked men; such persons have by no means violated the commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’”
 - b. An example of war waged by “divine command” above refers to God’s commanding His people to wage war when going in to possess the promised land.
 - c. Another example of just war is the exercise of those who “have represented in their persons the public justice or the wisdom of government, and in this capacity have put to death wicked men”
 - 1) **“Thou shalt not murder”** (NASB) is a better translation of **Ex 20:13** than what St. Augustine gave.
 - 2) A person exercising such authority for such “just and necessary occasion” against wicked men, is not guilty of murder.
2. WLC 135 in answering the question: *“What are the duties required in the sixth commandment?”* says we have the duty of “...avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defense thereof against violence.”

In summary, it is a lawful calling to serve your city, parish, state, or nation as a civil ruler. God can & has used many Christians throughout history to promote piety, justice, & peace. One reason why we have a political climate that is less than desirable is because too many devout Christians have not answered this call for various reasons.

¹ Calvin, J. (1997). [*Institutes of the Christian religion*](#). Logos Bible Software.