

Health Care Reform

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Have you ever known anyone who didn't have the money to see a doctor? I have, and it's not a situation anybody wants to be in. When I was a child, even people of modest means were generally able to get health care. And doctors still occasionally made house calls! But not any more. When you visit today's health care provider, the first thing they ask you for is your insurance card. If you don't have insurance, be prepared to pay in full on the day of service. Even a routine doctor's visit can cost several hundred dollars if one does not have access to health insurance. For many Americans today—even those supposedly in the middle class—adequate health insurance simply isn't affordable.

With Congress now crafting various health care reform bills, Christians face some dilemmas about how to respond. As a Bible-believing Christian, I believe that every human being is made in God's image and deserving of adequate medical care. Christ the healer is our model: he healed young and old, poor and rich. Indeed, his healing ministry undergirds the whole notion of medical

care as a right and not a privilege. I admit I sound rather idealistic. On this and other issues, however, I try to base my views on Scripture rather than on secular political platforms. Hence, I am neither a "conservative" or a "liberal" on health care reform. I do believe in the principle of a reform that makes adequate health care available to all. In one of my classes, I polled our international students about health care in their own countries. The nations represented do have nationalized health care; and despite some problems, the students and their family members seem to benefit from it. I also disagree with the anti-government mentality. Scripture gives government a legitimate place within a society, and governments do have certain responsibilities towards their citizens (During the 1960s, the conservatives were "for" government and the radicals {today's older liberals} were "against" it. Today, the situation seems reversed.) Health care is, I believe, an issue in which the government can exercise some legitimate authority on behalf of its people.

However, I am not satisfied that

the right course is currently being taken in this nation. As of this writing (October 13), a proposed reform package has just cleared the Senate Finance Committee. This package strikes me as being very expensive to implement while still not providing health care access to those who need it most. As a Christian, I might be willing to pay a little more in taxes if the "least of these" were going to benefit from my contributions. But the current proposal, as I understand it, does not reach down to our poorest. Then there is the affordability issue. With our nation's coffers drained by war and recession, will we face ruination if we go deeper and deeper into debt to fund this reform? Should our government impose more taxes to minimize that debt? "Soaking the rich" may not be the answer, but neither is neglecting the poor. So where does that leave us? I don't know enough about medicine and economics and insurance to offer an informed, realistic proposal. So what I will leave you with are some observations and questions. As Christians, I believe we cannot simply let those in need do without access to medical

treatment. And if the government cannot provide it, or provide enough of it, then Christians need to consider how to help.

How can we do so? You might support nonprofit organizations that provide health care access to the poor, support your churches' efforts in these areas, or even pay a medical bill for a friend in need. If you pursue a medical career, seek opportunities to minister to those who cannot afford "market-rate" health care. If you do (or don't) support government health care reform, let your members of Congress know. Your voice does influence their decisions. Work and pray! You know the old saying "prayer changes things?" It does, and in ways we don't always expect. Don't just be a conservative—or a moderate or a liberal—on political issues. Read the Scriptures, see what God seems to be saying about the matter, and then think creatively about what the Lord would have you do.

Christianity and Politics

Travis Wilson

When becoming a Christian we admit, or at least should admit, that there is nothing that this world has to offer that has real meaning and we surrender our selfish worldly pursuits to look to God for worth and value in all things. In contrast, when we come to politics, we admit that this world can be made better and life can be made easier or more just. The Christian looks up and forward to a value found in God,

while the politician looks out to the world around them and speak of prosperity and justice here in this life, with little interest in or mention of the eternal and ultimate purposes behind it all. It is therefore necessary for Christians to ask whether or not faith and politics can really match, if one is embedded in worldly ambition and the other in a service to Christ which may easily call on the Chris-

tian to make sacrifices which fly in the face of all the pragmatism that is built into the political system.

I remember watching the election results come in for the election between Bill Clinton and George Bush Sr in 1992 when I was six years old and since a young age, I have kept scrapbooks of elec-

tions and worked in campaigns. I have had a love for politics that has been rare for someone so young, but as life has progressed, I have questioned more and more the nature of people and our need for God, and as I have, my conviction on the importance of politics has waned. We fight about respect for soldiers and others march in the streets and write whole books about respecting the life style choices of others, but to what avail if there is no concept of God? The best tool that any politician has to invigorate a voting base is to give them something to be proud of. Listen to a politician and you will hear him tell you to be proud of your lifestyle, of the fact that you are smarter than the other guy, of what you have done, or of how little you have. Pride is an aspect of man's fallen nature and yet even in Christian politics, we are told to

be proud of our Christian heritage. What is our Christian heritage? Is it what we will be judged on in the next life? Is our Christian heritage a reflection of our convictions? Does it require a self sacrificing spirit from us?

If I have point in what I am saying it is this: we who are Christians need to find a way in which we can interact with politics that has self sacrifice woven into it. The moment we find ourselves becoming prideful of the fact that we are Christians, we forget that we are only able to be so by the grace of God. For conservatives, we must be careful to keep our views on nation and heritage subject to our religion, and for the liberal, caution must be taken to not allow environmentalism or our pride in our chosen lifestyle to override or contradict our faith as Christians.

