

The Christian and Non-Christians Governments

When they call the roll in the Senate, the senators do not know whether to answer “present” or “not guilty.”
THEODORE ROOSEVELT (1858–1919)

Government originated as an ordinance of God. It is, in one sense, God’s response to the nature of the people themselves. While it cannot redeem the world or be used as a tool to establish the kingdom of God, civil government does set the boundaries for human behavior. The state is not a remedy for sin, but a means to restrain it.
CHARLES COLSON (1931–)

What was the conduct of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? . . . Did these men do right in disobeying the law of their sovereign? Let their miraculous deliverance from the burning fiery furnace answer.
ANGELINA GRIMKÉ (1805–1879)

Romans 13: 1 – 7

1) Government is a God ordained authority

- Paul is writing to the church in Rome emphatically stating that everyone – this includes Christians – must submit to governing authorities because it is God who has established
 - We need to take into account that there were no Christian governments in Paul’s time. Therefore Paul was referring to the Roman government which was idolatrous, corrupt and immoral.
 - It is almost unthinkable that a Holy God would ordain a wicked government
- God is Sovereign and He has never lost control over this fallen world in which we live.
- The pride of man thinks that he has put himself into power or that he is so great that people have voted for him. However even a pagan king knew better than that. Nebuchadnezzar, after seeing the wonders of God stated:
 - Daniel 2: 21 He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them.
 - Daniel 4: 17 The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men
- It was God who gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom even calling him His servant but God will give his land to others after his time
 - Jeremiah 27: 6 – 7 Now I will hand all your countries over to my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him. All nations will serve him and his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes; then many nations and great kings will subjugate him.
- God referred to Cyrus, a Persian king, as His anointed
 - Isaiah 45: 1 This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him
- Jesus recognised the authority that God had given Pilate, a governor of the Roman government
 - John 19: 11 Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above

2) The Separation of the Church and the State

- When the early church was established it was done so under Jewish and pagan rule as an expression of the Kingdom of God on earth
- The church functioned under pagan rule until the 4th Century when Constantine the Great declared Christianity to be the state religion. At first this seemed to be a major victory for Christians. However this had serious drawbacks.

- Although the Bishops were given authority to rule in civil cases the state also assumed authority to rule over the church.
- Thus often pagan rulers would dictate to the church the way the affairs of the church should go.
- This continued until the Reformation in the 16th Century when John Calvin taught that the Church should have the right to run its own affairs without interference from the government.
- It was after this separation of Church and State that groups such as the Anabaptists that would not take part in government at all. Their argument being that if Christians are not to take other Christians to court then they are not to be responsible for the courts. These are some of the origins of why Christians don't believe that Christians should be involved in politics.

3) The Christian's Responsibility to the Government

- Submit to the Government (13: 1)
 - This means that we are to be obedient to , put ourselves under, make ourselves subject to the government
 - This basically means that we accept and obey the laws that the government have set
 - We do not rebel against the government by disobeying the laws that have been set
 - We accept the consequences when we do disobey the laws of the land (v.3 – 4)
 - We can expect the government to work for our good (v.4)
 - Some areas of responsibility of the Christian to the non-Christian Government
 - Pay taxes (v. 6)
 - Luke 20: 22 – 25 Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" He saw through their duplicity and said to them, "Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?" "Caesar's," they replied. He said to them, "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."
 - Give respect and honour (v. 7)
 - We so easily criticize the government but are slow to give respect where it is due.
- Resist obeying the Government when the Non-Christian Government contradicts the Word of God
 - Acts 5: 29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"
 - We remember how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down and worship an image at the instruction of Nebuchadnezzar
- Participate with the Government
 - Both Joseph and Daniel became high up officials in non-Christian Governments where God placed them and used them
 - William Wilburforce changed legislation and slavery was abolished.
 - Willaim Carey fought against the practise of suttee (wife burning) in India until it was outlawed
 - Some are called by God to actively work in politics. The rest of us should not hinder them but back them. We need to keep in mind that the details could be contentious as various Christians join different political parties.
- Pray for the Government
 - 1 Timothy 2: 1 – 2 "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."