

The Truth Project

Part 9 “The Role of Government: Truth or Consequences”

Gary Emmons – 11.1.09

Today we are in Part 9 of the Truth Project, “The Role of Government” in the world. Before we read today’s verses, I want to talk about the person who wrote them, the Apostle Paul.

Paul was a leader in the Jewish faith and rejected Jesus and his ministry. After the resurrection, Paul was on the road to arrest Christians for worshipping a false God. While on the road, he was confronted by Christ himself and not only became a Christian, but the writer of 14 books in the New Testament. He became a superstar in the Christian world in the first century, except in Jerusalem. There, the religious leaders hated Paul because of his decision to become a Christ follower. They would kill him if they ever had a chance.

Paul decides to return to Jerusalem in 57 AD and being very bold, decides to go to the Jewish Temple. Word spread immediately and the bible says, **“the whole city was aroused”**, coming from all directions with clubs in their hands. They dragged Paul out of the Temple and scripture says, **“while they were trying to kill him”** news spread and the Roman troops came to Paul’s rescue. Being a Roman citizen, Paul appealed to Caesar and was taken to Rome to stand trial. He arrived in Rome, after a shipwreck nearly killed him, in 60 AD and was placed under house arrest for the next 2 years, shackled to a soldier. He was free to write and receive visitors. But, Paul knew that one day he would face the Emperor Nero and probably be put to death for his Christian belief. He was right, Nero, hated Christians and ordered Paul to be tortured until he denied his faith. When that didn’t work, Nero beheaded him. Now, with that in mind, listen to what Paul writes in today’s verses.

Romans 13:1-7 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. 6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. NIV

1. “There is no authority except that which God has established.”

Daniel 2:20-21 "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. 21 He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them.

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Proverbs 8:15-16 By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; 16 by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth.

2 Samuel 12:7 Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel..

John 19:10-11 "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" 11 Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.

Psalms 103:19 The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. NIV

The government is a God appointed institution. Many people hate the government because of the abuses they often create. But, Paul reminds us that governments were established by God. **There are 4 authorities that God has established on earth: 1. *the Government over their citizens* 2. *The church over the believers* 3. *The parents over their children* 4. *Employers over employees***

Let's look at a chunk of history for a second and see how God has been sovereign in nations.

God sends Abraham to the promise land but he ends up in Egypt. Abraham receives wealth from Pharaoh after Pharaoh makes an ill-advised play for Sarah, Abrahams wife. They return to the promise land wealthy. Abraham's great, great grandson, Joseph, is thrown into a pit by his brothers for sharing his dream that they would one day bow down to him. Midianite travelers find him and take him to Egypt where he is sold to Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer. Joseph interprets a dream for the king and is placed second in command, storing up food for a coming famine. Not recognizing Joseph, his brothers show up for food and bow before him. Israel is reunited in Egypt and grows into the millions over the next 400 years. Moses is born in Egypt and convinces Pharaoh to let God's people go back to the promise land. After many battles the people of God inhabit the land He promised them. They eventually divide into two nations, Israel and Judah. God raises up Assyria to punish Israel for rejecting God.

1 Chron 5:26 So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria (that is, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria), who took the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh into exile.

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But then Assyria misbehaves and takes advantage of the Jewish people and other nations. God now judges them.

Habakkuk 1:6-9 I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own. 7 They are a feared and dreaded people...8 Their horses are swifter than leopards...They fly like a vulture swooping to devour; 9 they all come bent on violence. NIV

Not only do they conquer Assyria, but God uses them to punish Judah, destroying Jerusalem, the temple, and exiling the Jewish people back to Babylon, what is modern day Bagdad. But even the nations He uses, He punishes.

Jeremiah 51:44 I will punish Bel in Babylon and make him spew out what he has swallowed. The nations will no longer stream to him. And the wall of Babylon will fall.

70 years later he raises up ***Cyrus the Great*** to remove the Babylonians from power and send the Jewish people back to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem.

Isaiah 45:13 I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the LORD Almighty." NIV

Time out for a second. Names like Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini are never beyond the reach of God. Remember King Nebuchadnezzar, he thought he was above God.

Dan 4:29-32 the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" 31 The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. 32 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes."

Ps 135:6 The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth..
There is no authority except that which God established.

2. We are called to submit to the rulers and authorities.

Romans 13:1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities...

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1 Peter 2:13-14 *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 1NIV*

Titus 3:1-2 *Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, 2 to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. NIV*

1 Tim 2:1-4 *I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. NIV*

God is so serious about our obedience to authorities that he compares it to obeying Him in today's verse 2.

Rom 13:2 *Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.*

Does that mean we are to obey government in all circumstances? No. Remember when the rulers forbid Peter and John to preach the gospel.

Acts 5:28-29 *"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." 29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"*

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into a furnace for refusing to obey a decree of Nebuchadnezzar that was ungodly. When the time comes, we must obey God when the government asks us not to. But, be prepared to face the consequences like the Apostle Paul, and the other martyred Apostles.

3. God establishes government to display His goodness and His justice.

Rom 13:4 *For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*

How is the government a servant of good? The deficiencies of governments usually reflect the deficiencies of the society they serve. Does “**servant to do you good**” include: public protection from crime, freedom of religions, free to speak and vote,

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environmental issues, uncontaminated food? Does the good the government provides relate to: personal property, health and welfare of those citizens?

When Jesus says to be a "good Samaritan" and take care of your neighbor when does that become the government's responsibility?

Government also serves as God's "agent of wrath." **GOD'S WRATH = God's anger against sin.** He hates when people sin against one another. It is the nation's ordained duty to dispense punishment. Paul says, "But if you do wrong, be afraid." Are people afraid of the consequences before they do a drive by shooting? If not, why not? As Christians, we have to support and encourage the justice system because they have been ordained by God. Why should we submit to authorities? Because of our good conscience toward God.

Rom 13:5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. NIV

Remember when Saul was jealous of David and chased him around trying to kill him. At one point, Saul went into a cave to...go the bathroom, and David and his men were hiding in the back of it..

1 Sam 24:4-7 The men said, "This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.'" Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. 5 Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. 6 He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD." 7 With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.

When we respect God's sovereignty, we should submit to our leaders. We should actively pray for them and do whatever we can to make them successful.

We're going to sing....

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Communion

Yes, there are nations that are criminal and have no part of God. But they are not being overlooked.

Zeph 2:10-11 This is what they will get in return for their pride, for insulting and mocking the people of the LORD Almighty. 11 The LORD will be awesome to them when he destroys all the gods of the land. The nations on every shore will worship him, every one in its own land.

But there is a way.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Nah 1:2-3 The LORD takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies. 3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished.