

The Role of Government

Our Biblical Worldview—part 3

September 20, 2020

DAY 1: Understanding God's design of government

1. There are two doctrines of human nature that inform our view of “good government”

a. **DIGNITY.** Man is made in God's image and we are to rule and reign on earth

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

b. **DEPRAVITY.** We are fallen. Our very nature has a bias against God and His ways, and a bias toward self and self-interest over every other person, thing or purpose. We are capable of great evil.

Hebrews 9:27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

2. God-ordained purposes of government

a. Order.

1 Timothy 2:1 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,

b. Uphold the natural moral law and security of negative rights

1 Peter 2:13 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.

c. Punish sin (crime)

Romans 13:1 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.

3. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Understanding our American context

1. “Developing a Christian view of government is difficult since the Bible does not provide an *exhaustive* treatment of government. This itself is perhaps instructive and provides us with some latitude for these institutions to reflect the needs and demands of particular cultural situations. Because of this ambiguity, Christians often hold different views on particular political issues because the Bible does not speak directly to every area of political discussion. However, Christians are not free to believe whatever we want. Christians should not abandon the Bible when we begin to think about these issues because there is a great deal of biblical material which can be used to judge particular political options. The Bible does not propose nor endorse any specific political system. The Bible, however, does provide a basis for *evaluating* various political philosophies because it clearly delineates a view of human nature.” – Kerby Anderson, Probe Ministries

2. When reading through the Old Testament history or world history, every government must face two terrible problems because of human sin.

- a. How can we keep citizens from violating the rights of others?
- b. How can we keep the government from violating the rights of citizens?

3. We are not the first ones to attempt to take the biblical principles of government and apply them. Our founding fathers undertook this effort two hundred and fifty years ago. Their understanding of the bible enabled them to craft the greatest government system ever created. But remember, no system of government is perfect because all people, both government leaders and citizens are all sinners. Those that advocate for the destruction for our system of government (anarchists, Antifa, etc.) are seeking a Utopia in this world. That goal is impossible because of sin.

4. The **Declaration of Independence** contains **four biblical principles of government**.

a. **God is the Ruler of the World: Supreme Legislator, Executive and Judge**

*Isaiah 33:22 For the LORD is our **judge**, the LORD is our **lawgiver**, the LORD is our **king**; it is he who will save us.*

b. **God is the Creator and giver of rights, not men:**

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

c. **People are sovereign over a king. Government’s purpose is to secure and defend rights, not give rights**

“That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,”

d. **Unjust government should be opposed, altered or abolished by the people:**

“That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

5. When we say “America was **founded** as a *Christian* nation” we do not mean everyone was a Christian or everyone went to church. What we mean is that our political understandings and understanding of human nature was biblical.

6. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: Biblical principles within the Constitution of the United States

1. Limited constitutional government

- a. We are a republic – making the effort for the “common good”
- b. We are not a pure democracy. The founders feared the tyranny of the majority.
- c. Enumerated powers: Article 1 Section 8: The 17 specific things that the US government is lawfully permitted to do. By limiting the scope of the government it would keep government from violating citizen rights.

2. Separation of powers

- a. Sinfulness checks sinfulness. Each branch of government has limits on its power. “Checks and balances.”
- b. James Madison believed in this balanced view of human nature.

“But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. {3}” -James Madison, Federalist Papers, #51

- c. Framing a republic requires a balance of power that liberates human dignity and rationality and controls human sin and depravity. (Both sides of human nature)

“As there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust, so there are other qualities in human nature, which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form. {4}” -Madison, Federalist Papers #55, p. 346.

3. Consent of the governed

- a. Regular, free and fair elections.
- b. Amendment process of the Constitution.
- c. One of the greatest threats to our God-given Constitutional Republic is the Administrative state. This is unaccountable, unelected officials who exercise legislative, executive and judicial power in one office.

4. Protection of minorities against the tyranny of the majority.

- a. The Bill of Rights

No government is perfect because no citizen or politician is perfect. We can and should continue to work to make things better around us, but we can't dismiss the system because it's not perfect. That Idea itself has an unbiblical view of human nature inside of it-- that we can create perfect governments.

What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Duties of citizens

1. When God's people were overrun and exiled to Babylon, God gave word to Jeremiah to send a letter to the exiles. The letter had to do with how to think and live in godless Babylon and under the godless king Nebuchadnezzar.

Jeremiah 29:7 "Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

2. How were God's people to think about their exile? What were they to do?

3. The principle of authority and submission is a prominent principle of design in life.

*Romans 13:1 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.*

Romans 13:3 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.

4. There are at least two authorities mentioned: God's ultimate authority and His delegated authority to government and the justice system. How are we to think about authority?

Romans 13:5 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.

5. What additional duties do we have as citizens?

6. For a number of years, some pastors have advocated for a "spiritual-only" approach to government. "Just trust God with whatever happens." While we are always called to trust God "no matter what happens," that doesn't mean we are to abdicate any of our stewardships. Nowhere in scripture are God's people to "divorce themselves" from life, or government. Instead we are always called to **think biblically** how we can **engage** with the people, responsibilities and institutions of life.

Matthew 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: How are we to think about our government? Wisdom must be applied, not just theorized.

1. Some issues are very clear as to what is true to God.
2. Some issues are very complex—there are many facets to them. Truth applied to issues requires discernment, wisdom and sound judgment in such cases.
3. Truth has to be applied in the **context** in which you live. Our context is:
 - **The USA**. There are national, state and local elections.
 - **POWER SHARED and DISPERSED**
 - Our federal government divides or disperses political power between three branches: legislative, executive and judicial.
 - Our form of government is called federalism. Power is ALSO shared between the federal government and 50 state governments, country and city governments. The founders made a gallant effort to limit the power of the federal government (and politicians) to rights which were only enumerated in the Constitution (The 10th Amendment).
 - **PLATFORMS and POLICY**
 - In elections you are voting for something far more pervasive and important than who will be president. Power is shared by the Senate, the House of Representatives, and fifty state governments.
 - In our system of government you are more truly voting for a party's platform. Each party has its own worldview. That platform provides the guiding values of each party.
 - What is the most telling information about what to expect from candidates for office? It is each party's platform which the delegates debate and vote on just before their conventions.
 - **POLITICIANS:**
 - The founders limited the power of politicians as much as could be made.
 - Candidates, like all of us are not perfect. Everyone is a sinner. Our founders made politicians subject to the Constitution, the Law, and the people.

Additional Materials for Study:

- a. To gain a general understanding of a Biblical View of Politics, Government, and Social Action read <https://www.ministeriosprobe.org/MGManual/Politics/Gov1.htm#Intro>
- b. To understand the American form of Government
 - i. Read the Declaration of Independence <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
 - ii. Read US Constitution <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>
 - iii. Read Bill of Rights <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript>
- c. To understand why Christians should defend the principles of the American founding read President Coolidge 4th of July Address <https://www.coolidgefoundation.org/resources/speeches-as-president-1923-1929-7/>
- d. Watch “The Connection Between the Declaration and the Constitution” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGGx7sTDnMY>
- e. To understand what has caused the corruption of the U.S. Constitutional Order watch “The Grand Liberal Project” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSXt-v-MQsY&t=292s>