

THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT

Int.

1. Aim: To show that we must be in subjection to the government.
2. Rom. 13:1-2 "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." NKJV v. 1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.
 - a. We are living under the laws of God
 - b. These laws of God teach us that we must be subject to the laws of the land
 - c. The only time we can disobey the laws of the land is if they conflict with the laws of God - Acts 5:29 "we must obey God rather than man."
 - d. God ordained civil government for the benefit of mankind.
 - e. God desires that government provide for the peace and tranquility of all its citizens.
 - f. Without government a state of anarchy would prevail and this would produce all kinds of evil.
3. A Government may be lawless and therefore not a minister of God to avenge evil. The Christian's relationship to such a government is changed.
4. Our Declaration of Independence affirms that government derives its just powers from God.

Discussion

I. THE CHARACTER OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

- A. What is civil government?
1. It is not moral government
 - a. It does not legislate morality
 - b. It does not punish immorality but that which is uncivil
 2. Civil = pertaining to a city or a state and a citizens relation to his fellow-citizen
 3. The civil laws define crime not sin
- B. The Civil government pertains only to that which is civil
1. Mark 12:17 "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."
 2. The civil government enforces certain moral precepts such as murder and robbery
 3. These are enforced not as a violation of God's commands but as a violation of a civil command
 4. If the civil government were to enforce the commands of God then the civil authorities could not punish a man who had committed a crime and been forgiven by God.
- C. The civil government has the divine right to protect the property and lives of its citizens.
1. If it wasn't this way every man would take matters into his own hand and lawlessness would result.
 2. The individual surrenders his rights and in return receives the protection of the civil government.

3. Rom. 12:19 "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

D. God does not ordain the particular ruler or type of government, but the idea or organization of government which is to avoid confusion and anarchy.

II. ROMANS 13:1-7

A. V.1

1. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers

- a. Higher powers = governing authorities in NKJV = civil government
- b. Every soul = all people including Christians
- c. Many Christians did not like the Roman government but they were commanded
- d. Subject = come under, obey

2. No power but of God

- a. God permits it or ordains that there be government
- b. This does not mean he approves of shameful deeds of rulers

3. Powers that be are ordained of God

- a. Ordained of God so we can live a peaceable life - 1 Tim. 2:1-3
- b. This does not mean:
 - (1) That God always approves of their conduct
 - (2) That what they do is always right
- c. It means that God has ordained that men be governed
- d. God does not decide if it would be a democracy, republic or dictatorship

B. V. 2

1. **Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God**
 - a. To defy the authority of the government is to array oneself against God and the government
 - b. Jesus never disobeyed any law, nor did he ever promote civil disobedience
2. **They that resist shall receive to themselves damnation**
 - a. Damnation = judgement, punishment
 - b. To disobey the civil laws is sin in the sight of God

C. V. 3

1. **Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil**
 - a. Terror = fear of punishment
 - b. Fear is one of the means by which men are restrained from crime
2. **Wilt thou be afraid of the power? Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same**
 - a. All governments are pleased with law-abiding citizens
 - b. Praise = approval

D. V. 4

1. **Minister of God to thee for good**
 - a. They were meant to be ministers of God for the good of the people
 - b. To guard and protect us in our rights

2. **But if thou do that which is evil... afraid... sword . execute wrath**
 - a. **Sword**
 - (1) Symbol of power, authority, to inflict punishment - death penalty
 - (2) God approves of capital punishment - **Gen. 9:6**
 - (3) Civil Government has the right to practice capital punishment
 - b. **Avenger**
 - (1) Vengeance belongs to God - Rom. 12:19
 - (2) Execute wrath upon the evil doer -
 - (3) Rulers are the agents of God's wrath
 - (4) If a Christian does evil he is not exempt from punishment

E. V.5

1. **Ye must needs be subject not only for wrath**
 - a. Obey
 - b. Wrath = fear of punishment, or penalty from the government
2. **But also for conscience sake**
 - a. A duty we owe to God that we may have a good conscience
 - b. 1 Pet. 2:13 "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;"
 - c. Ecl. 8:2 - obligation to God

F. V.6

1. **For this cause pay ye tribute also**
 - a. Also - not only be subject, but support
 - b. Tribute = taxes, finances
 - c. Christians must pay their share of taxes
2. **God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing**
 - a. Appointed ministers of God to punish the evil doer and to preserve order among the lawless
 - b. They must be paid to do this work

G. V.7

1. **Render therefore to all their dues**
 - a. Give what is due them in the position they occupy
 - b. 1 Pet. 2:13-14
2. **Tribute to whom tribute is due**
 - a. Tribute is referring to the taxes or compensation which we pay
 - b. Any tax paid or the support of government
3. **Custom to whom custom**
 - a. Revenue
 - b. Imports or trades

4. **Fear to whom fear**
 - a. Stand in awe of those appointed to execute the laws of the land
 - b. Do not do anything to offend them
5. **Honour to whom honour**
 - a. The rulers are entitled to respect
 - b. Respect for the office

III. THE FUNCTION OF THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT

- A. Rom. 13:4
 1. Purpose is to maintain order
 2. In so doing it is working for God to help people.
- B. Various functions which help
 1. Police and law enforcement - military to provide protection
 2. Roads, travel,
 3. Communication
- C. Make laws
 1. To function orderly the different levels of government must make laws
 2. Is it right for us to vote?
 3. Yes, It is right for law to be enforced therefore let us be on the side of law and order by voting.

4. Some do not vote because there is corruption in politics and government
 - a. They feel that if they vote they are supporting the government in things they believe are wrong
 - b. The government doesn't view it that way
 - c. The Bible does not teach this
 - d. The government will do whatever they do whether we vote or not
 - e. But if we as Christians vote then we can help elect the best people to do the job and pass the best laws

D. There is a difference between civil government and the church

1. The civil government does not have any right to legislate religious issues - when it does there will always be problems!
2. The church should not use physical force or appeal to government power to enforce the law of Christ.
3. John 18:36 NKJV "Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."
 - a. The expression "not of this world" means that the kingdom of Christ is of the other world than the civil sphere¹
 - b. The converse is true, the civil sphere is not in the nature of the spiritual
 - c. Each must act within its own sphere.
 - d. One is a kingdom of this world; the other is not of this world.

- E. The Christian has a relation to both
1. He is not exempt from the duties to either the government or the church.
 2. Some assume that when they become a Christian they are automatically exempt from civil and military duties that are required of others.
 - a. Morality is not a respecter of persons. It is a universal law.
 - b. Anything that is morally wrong for one person would be morally wrong for all
 - c. If civil and military services are morally wrong to the member of the church, they are morally wrong to members of society.
 3. Christians can be involved in government - we need righteous people to insure that the governments function in a godly fashion.

Conclusion

1. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." Prov. 14:34
 - a. Any government will be exalted when it operates according to the principles taught in God's word
 - b. Sin is a reproach to any people and a disgrace to any government
2. The Roman Empire fell because people forgot God and engaged in sinful activity
3. "Under God" ruled unconstitutional -by 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals
 - a. The ruling said that the two words "Under God" amount to a government endorsement of religion
 - b. The first Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."
 - c. Liberal judges in recent years have interpreted this to mean that there should be no mention of anything about God or religion

- d. This is not what the writers of the Constitution had in mind - they wanted the government to be the government and not in any way be interfering with religion - they did not want a State Religion
 - e. "The first amendment of the constitution was not written to protect the people of this country from religious values; it was written to protect religious values from government tyranny." - by Ronald Regan
 - f. This is exactly what Jesus was teaching when he said: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."
Matt. 22:21
4. As Christians we are members of the Church which we read about in the Bible. Then we are to be under the civil laws of the country in which we live. The only exception would be if the laws of the country contradict the laws of God.

Endnotes

1. The Sermon on the Mount and the Civil State by Foy E. Wallace p. 152

Sermon by Arthur Pigman - Sunday Morning May 30, 2010
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