

## Thinking about Civil Government

Romans 12:2; 13:1-7 ESV

- I. God's purpose for civil government.
  - a. Civil government is under God, but different than the kingdom of God.
    - i. John 19:11 ESV "Jesus answered him, 'You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore, he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.'" \* Pilate is God's servant even though he doesn't know it.
    - ii. John 18:36 ESV "Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.'" \* Only Jesus through the gospel can remove evil from people's hearts.
  - b. God gave the sword to civil government to restrain the sin nature. He just told us to not take our own revenge but leave room for the wrath of God. Now we find out about God's plan for justice in this present world. "He" (is civil government) carries a sword to punish evil for our good. It is called God's wrath because God ordained his position and ordained that he, civil government, would wield a sword. God's passive wrath comes through government.
  - c. America has lived out God's wrath through civil government in answer to prayer in its past.
    - i. The warning before America was founded. John Woolman's speech which led the Quakers to renounce slavery (He died in 1772):  
"Many slaves on this continent are oppressed, and their cries have reached the ears of the Most High! Such is the purity and certainty of His judgments that He cannot be partial in our favor. He has opened our understandings concerning our duty towards this people, and it is not a time for delay...If we do nothing, "it may be that by terrible things in righteousness God may answer us in this matter."
    - ii. Lincoln's second inaugural address – this is written on the Lincoln Memorial: "Fondly do we hope ~ fervently do we pray ~ that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue...until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword as was said three thousand years ago so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"
- II. Our response to civil government.
  - a. To obey them. Not just because of possible punishment but because of conscience. We are to be model citizens – pay taxes, honor them, and

respect their authority. Honor is most clearly needed when you don't agree. \*Fresca – confess to God; confess to the one who gave it to me; confess to our friends who heard it open; and now to the whole world! This is a strong motive not to sin in the future.

- b. When do we disobey civil government?
  - i. When the government is asking us to go against God we must obey our conscience instead of the government. Acts 4:19 ESV “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge...” Counted worthy to suffer.
  - ii. 2020 Government in Dane County felt the church was a non-essential business. \$1,000 a person over 50. \*Ron Cotter.
  - iii. The American Revolution – Thomas Paine wrote a pamphlet called Common Sense – when it is necessary to resist a government. \*I was asked by a precious Iranian man to pray for Iran.
- c. Whatever government we're in we are to pray for them. 1Timothy 2:1-4 ESV “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, <sup>2</sup>for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” \*The ideal government allows for freedom of religion so that the gospel can be preached in peace. \*Francis Frangipane in the early 90s about American military might. We need to pray that the sword will only be used the way God wants it to be used.

### III. Honoring America.

- a. Two things our founding fathers got right:
  - i. We have been created equal and given inalienable rights by our Creator – rights don't come from government and can't be taken away by government. First amendment – freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Freedom for religion, not freedom from religion. John Adams: “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”
  - ii. The separation of powers. The Protestant Revolution convinced the founders of the sinfulness of man that cannot be trusted with absolute power. \*Inefficient for a reason!
- b. One of the things they got wrong – we honor them not by covering them up, but by correcting them. The history of revival. The founding fathers didn't abolish slavery because of the perceived need of a unanimous vote on the constitution. A civil war was necessary to abolish slavery and the

13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the constitution was made. We all must continue to fight against prejudice wherever it is seen. (See Pastor Sarah's message)

- c. We honor the price others have paid and are still paying by living free and letting others live free, by voting, and by praying for America. They didn't have a vote back then, today we do and we should vote for whichever candidates most align with God's purpose for civil government.

#### IV. Don't idolize America.

- a. America is not God's chosen people; the church is. America is not the city set upon a hill or the light of the world; the church is. When politics is our god we are willing to sacrifice anything on that altar:
  - i. Fear and anger are embraced because they move people to give and to vote. \*The extremes of both parties make the most noise.
  - ii. If I have to slander, lie or deceive that's part of the price paid.  
\*Someone's going to have to get their hands dirty to win. The only sin is getting caught.
  - iii. You may win in America, but we all lose in the kingdom. Ps. 37:8 ESV "Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil." You will start trying to fight darkness and end up empowering it. Evil triumphs when good men do nothing, and when good men act out of fear and anger instead of waiting for God to tell them what to do. Psalm 37:7 ESV "Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!" \*The tares – don't be too quick – it's about the harvest. Don't be so quick to remove tares because they might be wheat!
- b. The solutions republicans and democrats generally have for our nation:
  - i. Republicans might say – "We want less government, and more deregulation; help us reduce or even avoid taxes and we promise those who become wealthy will share with those in need, and give more jobs to the poor. Trust us!" Here's what the average American is trying to say that Republicans have trouble hearing: "We don't trust you. That's why we have anti-trust laws that curb ambition and greed, and we want laws to make sure you pay your full share of taxes because we want there to be help for the poor and marginalized and we know mankind's ability to turn a blind eye on the least of these."
  - ii. Democrats might say – "We want more government. Put us in office and we will put the smartest people in leadership, but we need more of your money so we can pay for more of our programs that will make America work for everyone. Trust us!" Here's what the average American is saying that Democrats have trouble hearing: "We don't trust you! Just because you're intellectually smart

doesn't mean you're moral or wise, and we don't want someone else telling us how to live our lives."

iii. It's not easy being in government – honor them but don't see them as the solution for America. A good government can't save a nation, but a bad government can destroy one.

c. America is not the answer for the world, the church is.

i. We have freedom so we can model love to an angry and fearful America. Galatians 5:13 ESV "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." It's confusing when Christians take up the same fear and anger that is all around them.

ii. We have freedom so we can stir ourselves up to seek God. 2Chronicles 7:14 ESV "...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." \*Revival and awakening – Intimacy with God – this is our time!!!!

iii. If I can find a remnant the whole land will be saved – let's be part of that remnant. Genesis 18:26 ESV "And the LORD said, 'If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake.'" Those who have both imputed and imparted righteousness.