

Title: Christians as Sojourners

Passage: 1 Peter 2:9-17

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But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Context of Passage:

Audience: Christians under persecution across the region

Key Points

- Be heavenly minded
- Think how can influence others around you

EXPOSITION

Overview

How are Christians relate to the world and to government?

I. Governments are Instituted by God

1 Peter 2:13-14

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Government

- God established this ("for the Lord's sake")
- Definition: administration of life in an organized society as well as the body of officials that presides over the process
 - Why? When people are left alone, it will lead to disorganization and danger.
- governments are elected by the people for the people.

Genesis 9:5-6 (sign of first civil government)

And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

- Capital punishment set clear, which needed to be administered. Once set, then less severe crimes with less severe punishments were validated.
- Origin:
 - people grouped together by families
 - Families gathered together by tribes.
 - Individual tribes gathered together as a nation of Israel under a common constitution.
- But:
 - Over time, tribes rebelled and were doing what they own wanted.
- Then:
 - God used Samuel to anoint Saul as a new king to bring people back together.

1 Samuel 8:5

and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations."

- Then David was anointed and reflected what godly government was to be
 - Delegation of duties to elders and nobles
 - Established system and process of administration (archives/records, soldiers, etc.)
- New Testament
 - Jesus still submitted Himself to governing authorities (paying taxes, etc.).
 - Paul/Peter: both wrote of how the state was understood as God's provision for human safety and well-being.

II. Roles of Government (v.13-14)

Romans 13:3-4

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

A. to restrain evil and punish the evil-doers

Romans 13:3-4

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- what happens when there is no government?

Judges 21:25

In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

- Book of Judges show the result of no government = sinful people make their own morality and end up hurting its own people.

B. to praise the one who does good / protect people who acting rightly.

- encourage human dignity and not promote laziness
- Contrast: bad government promotes bad behavior and punishes good doers
 - Ex: Romanian poor people who admitted they didn't work because they rely on welfare instead of working.

Romans 1:24-25

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

C. Serve the people and seek the good of the people of the nation

Romans 13:4a

for he is God's servant for your good.

- leaders are to serve for the good of the people (not themselves)

1 Samuel 12:3-4 (Samuel's good example in Old Testament)

Here I am; testify against me before the LORD and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me and I will restore it to you." They said, "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand."

- Self-enrichment is condemned.

1 Samuel 8:10-11 (Samuel's Warning Against Kings)

So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots.

- Principle: The more unchecked government is, then the more likely that its leaders will not serve the people but rather themselves.

D. Exists to safeguard and protect human liberty

1 Peter 2:16

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

In the beginning, God gave humans liberty: the freedom to choose to obey (or not):

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

- humans are of highest dignity as given individual freedom to rule and to choose.

Additional Considerations:

1. *Slavery and oppression are always viewed negatively in the Bible; human freedom*
- lack of freedom/slavery viewed as a result of judgment or sin (and not condoned in the Bible).

1 Timothy 1:8-10

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

- Liberty is essential to our humanity.
 - Any government that denies individual liberty exerts dehumanizing influence over people.
2. *Governments should protect basic human liberties*
- Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, etc.
 - Among liberties are space for civil disobedience on matters of conscience
 - Christians should worship God and in ways that are Biblically mandated.
 - Ex: Daniel refusal to bowing down to statue.
 - Ex: Apostles were standing up for their faith in preaching.
 - Compare: Romans 13
 - We are called to obey authorities - including the U.S. Constitution, federal government among others.
3. *Human liberty has to be considered in light of other Biblical teachings*
- human liberty is not an absolute right where people are free to do wrong (Ex: using one's freedom that endangers others; no killing others)

APPLICATIONS

Personal salvation is a work of God, not the government.

- The minister of the Gospel and transforming people's lives is given to the Church.
- Even the best of civil governments cannot give people a new heart.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- Do not put trust in a particular political party or government. It can never turn simple people into holy, righteous people.
- The primary need for every person and every society is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Inwardly transformed people are needed for a transformed society.

- Good laws are not enough to change society. Winning elections won't be enough.
 - Ex: Israel's own good laws didn't prevent it from disintegrating into anarchy
- Change of people's hearts must occur. Laws govern best when people have good moral character.
- Critical for the Church to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ without compromise and with power.
- When people's hearts are changed, they then are light to the world for God's glory.

Matthew 28:19-20

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Government's influence is significant in the way it affects people's moral convictions and the fabric of a nation.

- The course of a nation is set or determined by the types of laws and policies that are in place.

Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.

- Contrast: bad laws/policies lead to bad influences and effects on the people.

Isaiah 10:1

Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression,

Esther 3:13 (Bad law)

Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.

- Ex: Legalization of gay marriage led to great influence of policies in the nation, silencing opposing viewpoints, and resulting greater hurt in the nation.
- Truth: Sin destroys lives and Christians are commanded to love their neighbor
- Why speak up for just law and policies? Best way to love neighbor is to promote just laws and policies.
 - True loving is showing how God designed things and what is the best way to prosper.
 - Telling the truth, even when it hurts, shows love. It is not loving to allow another do whatever they feel they want to (ex: child wants to eat ice cream for breakfast).
- Danger: Hardening/cauterizing one's conscience

- When justifying or rationalizing wrong behavior, then our conscience becomes more dull and hardened to the truth.

Hebrews 3:15

As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."