

The Government's Role in our Lives

If you're an independent person like I am, the last few weeks have felt strange. COVID-19 has become a new part of our vocabulary. But beyond that, the idea of schools cancelling nationwide, churches not meeting, people working from home and the size of gatherings being restricted is unlike anything this nation has seen since the dramatic restrictions during WW II. But this enemy is unseen.

My own reaction has varied, in part because I'm not sure how to react. This is a learning process for all of us.

The Government's role has been interesting to watch. Most of us have never dealt with a national State of Emergency, let alone how to respond to it. Some of us may well have disagreed with some decisions (or at least felt like we wanted to).

What is God's will for us during times like this? How should believers respond to the Government's actions? The bottom-line is this: as good citizens.

Peter addressed charges that Christians were trouble-makers in his first letter with these words in 2:11-17:

"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having you conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in day of visitation."

"Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men - as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

Interesting, isn't it? Paul also addresses this issue in Romans 13:1-4 where he writes, "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. Therefore whoever resists that authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil."

I've been thinking about these ideas for days. Several clear principles emerge from

these passages.

- The Government, on its many levels, is an instrument of God.
- In general, it is God's will for us to obey the Government.
- Disobedience to them is considered disobedience to God.
- Believers are to distinguish themselves as good citizens.
- Since this is not our home and serve another Master, we should cause our behavior to bring glory to God. Our obedience to God should cause us to obey them.
- Believers good citizenship will help to quiet the notion that we are troublemakers as a result of our allegiance to Jesus.
- God often uses Government to protect us.
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How should believers react to the Government's direction? With obedience. There are those instances when Government oversteps and the Church is forced to "obey God rather than man". But our general marching orders are these.

Finally, consider Paul's words in 1 Timothy 2:1-4:

"Therefore, I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

Let's pray the Lord will use this to bring others to the salvation we enjoy. And let's remember Paul's admonition to bring our Government, on all levels, before the Lord. One goal of those prayers is lives that are lived peaceably and without the disruption we currently face.

God uses Government as an arm of His rule. He uses it to bring peace and quiet to our lives. Our role is to be good citizens, obey, and to pray for them. Part of those prayers involves thankful hearts that the chaos that is possible is restrained as God grants them wisdom. Let's bring our leaders before the Throne of Grace!

Pastor Dan