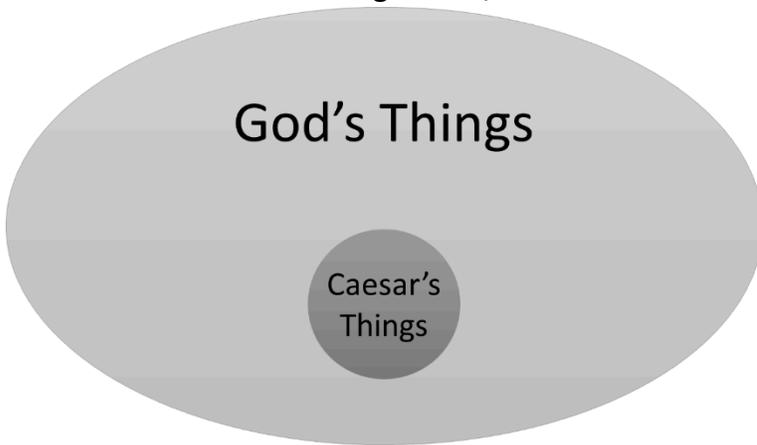


Follow Me
Week 9: Government

I. Today we're going to be looking at what God's Word says about politics.

What Scripture says about government.

- A. It is far too easy for us as Christians to bank our hopes on the state of our nation and the success of our preferred political party. And we can even get caught up in vilifying and expressing hostility toward other image bearers merely because they hold different political views than us.
- B. As Christians, while we are called to be politically engaged, we don't need to get caught up in these things because we believe that our King already has come... and He has established His kingdom, and He will one day return to fully usher it in.
 - 1. Not only does that great truth free us from getting wrapped up in the despair and hostility of today's politics, but it also gives us good news to share with our neighbors.
- C. In Mark 12 some of Jesus' opponents asked Him whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar.
"Whose likeness and inscription is this?"
 - 1. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."
 - 2. We've all been made in God's image, and therefore we owe Him our all.
Our whole lives belong to Him, and we owe Him everything.



- 3. And one application ... is that we shouldn't render to Caesar the things that are God's... and that includes our expectations and hopes. ... things that rightfully belong to God—our hope and our trust.
- 4. Only God will come through on every one of His promises.

Romans 13:1-7 (ESV) – 1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 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, 4 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... 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

- 5. Let every person be subject to the governing authority. For there is no authority except from God....
- 6. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

II. What Should Governments Do? First, we'll look at what our governments owe to God. Their job description.

- A. The Bible as a whole is largely silent about what form government should take.
- B. Governments have been instituted by God as His servants and they are supposed to do two things.

1. Uphold God's Justice

Romans 13:4b - 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. Might sound harsh, but it's actually a gift. We live in a fallen and broken world where people selfishly commit evil acts against one another. People consciously take advantage of and harm others for their own selfish gain and also act in reckless ways that can cause unintentional harm.
- b. And if there were no government to establish and enforce laws, that would not be a good thing. It would be chaos. Without any government or rule of law ... there would be no peace, order, and justice in this world.
- c. And governments do this by creating and enforcing laws that have real consequences. Governments are permitted to use physical force against those who break the law.
- d. And when they fail to do this, when they reward the wicked and punish the righteous or neglect the oppressed, they fail to do what God has called them to do.
- e. This also indicates that it is not the church's job to use physical force.
- f. God may call you as a Christian to work for the government as judges, police officers, lawmakers, or as a member of the armed forces. And this must be done responsibly. Christians serving in these roles is a good thing. In Luke 3:14, John the Baptist told soldiers not to abandon their posts, but instead to do their work justly.

2. Promote the Good

Romans 13:4-5 - For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad... Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good.

- b. In addition to punishing wicked actions, governments are also supposed to promote the good.
- c. And one of the ways they do this is by helping people work together to establish regulations, and infrastructure for things like roads, and sanitation, and drinking water, and electricity, and telecommunications, and civilian air travel, and public schools, and social services, and hospitals, and first responders, and much more. The example from "What has Rome ever done for us?"

C. Why Should Governments Do This?

1. When governments do their job well, it blesses God's church. When governments help people to live peaceful and quiet lives, it frees the church up to spread the Gospel without hindrance.
2. But when governments do their job poorly, it makes the work of the church more difficult.
3. In one sense, God's intention for the government is to build a stage on which the church can perform a play, wherein we demonstrate and portray the Gospel to a watching world.

If the government provides us with a good stage, we as the church are going to be able to do so without hindrance. God's church's job is to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples.

If the government is corrupt and society is really broken, then it will be much more challenging.

III. What Should We Do?

A. Second, we'll look at what we owe our government.

1. Submit to Governing Authorities

Romans 13:1 - Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.

1 Peter 2:13-14 - 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.

Titus 3:1 - Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work.

- a. Consider the Roman government of the day, and it was much worse than what we are facing today.
- b. And yet Paul was telling Christians to submit to those governing authorities ... and to do so for the Lord's sake. And not only that, but they were supposed to submit by paying their taxes, and by showing honor and respect to these problematic leaders. And these verses still apply to us today.

c. A Major Exception

(1) When human authorities command us to do something that God forbids or forbids us from doing what God commands, in those situations civil disobedience is a Christian duty.

And to do it in ways that still show honor and respect to authorities.

So, we are to submit to our government, except when doing so would require us to defy God.

Acts 5:29 - But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men..."

2. Pray for Governing Authorities

1 Timothy 2:1-3 - First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way...

a. No matter how much our leaders may frustrate us, no matter how much we disagree with them, we need to be praying for them. We need to pray that they will rule well, and that God will give them wisdom, direction, and effectiveness, so they will uphold God's justice and promote that which is good.

3. Influence Our Government

a. Paul was giving these instructions to people who didn't really have much influence over their government. But in a representative democracy, we do have some influence over our government and so it makes sense that if we should pray for our governing authorities to rule in ways that will reflect God's justice and promote that which is good, then we should also use our influence to help our government uphold God's justice and promote that which is good.

b. We should be salt and light to our government. As Christians, we should get informed and vote and try to get better candidates elected, and we should try to persuade representatives in authority to care about issues that matter to God. We are blessed to live in a nation where, along with everyone else, we are welcome to express our voice and advocate for what is good, and right, and true.

c. And when we enter the public square to debate and advocate for public policy issues, we should not be expected to check our deepest and core beliefs and values at the door, just because they're rooted in a Christian worldview. Our beliefs and values are just as valid as anyone else's beliefs and values.

d. And while it is important for us to seek to influence public policy, we also need to remember that's not the only political action we can take to address the issues that God cares about.

e. Love Our Neighbors – The most straight-forward political action we can take is to love our neighbors as ourselves!

4. Why Should We Do These Things?

a. Because Jesus is our true king, and His kingdom is coming!

b. He is a righteous, holy (without corruption), just, powerful, compassionate, and worthy king!

The only king worthy not just of our submission, respect, and honor, but our worship!

c. Because He is God in the flesh and because He died and rose again to redeem us—making all those who trust in Him by faith into citizens of His coming kingdom!

d. No matter what country we reside in now, Christians around the world are all citizens of a better country... a coming kingdom.

And it is our job to serve as ambassadors for that coming kingdom—to help our neighbors and our earthly governments prepare for the return of the true King!

And because our King and His kingdom will perfectly satisfy every desire we have for peace, and justice, and righteousness... we don't need to stake our ultimate hopes in our earthly governments here and now.

e. This truth will also help liberate us from all the partisan despair and nastiness.

When we more fully recognize Jesus as our King and we set our hopes on His kingdom, we will be set free to give to Ceasar the things that are Ceasar's and to God the things that are God's!