

With an election coming up shortly, it is a good time to be reminded that government is a gift from God for our good. Therefore we ought to show honor and respect to our government and thank God for it.

We will consider what God says about government in Romans 13:1-7.

“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. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 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. 4 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. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.”

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Paul makes a very interesting statement here. He says that the Government is God’s Minister. He mentions that three times. In verse 4 he says, “He is God’s minister to you for good.” Then he says again, “He is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” Then again in verse 6, “because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing.” So what does that mean?

The Government is God’s Minister for You!

First of all, don’t be confused by the word “Minister.” We often think of a minister as a religious worker. Don’t imagine the Government preaching or performing some religious duty for you. The government is definitely NOT that. The word Minister, or *Diakonos* in the Greek, means servant. The Government is God’s servant, to serve you.

Government is not a human invention or development. God says, “There is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.” God designed His creation to be orderly, and so He established a system of authority to maintain that order. Pontius Pilate recognized that he had authority to crucify Jesus or release Him, but Jesus told him, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.” John 19:11. Every Government receives its power and authority from God.

God did not ordain any particular form of government. There is no form of government that is more God pleasing, whether a monarchy, a constitutional republic, a democracy, or a parliamentary democracy as Canada has. But God has given all governments the authority to rule over people under them.

God also makes it clear WHY He established Government. Paul says in verse 4, “For he is God’s minister to you for good,” and as “an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” In other words, God established governments as His servants to protect people primarily by punishing evildoers. Can you imagine what the world would be like if there was no system of law enforcement to punish evil and keep the peace? Some people today foolishly think that we would be better off that way. But that’s already been tried and failed. In the beginning, before the time of Noah, there was no system of government to keep the peace. Lamech, the fifth generation after Cain, killed a man and dared anyone to punish him for it. That attitude continued and got worse. Everyone did what they wanted. Might made right and soon we read “The earth was filled with violence.” Gen. 6:11 It got so bad that God destroyed mankind in the flood.

After the flood God gave the command, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be

shed.” Gen. 9:6 So murder is still a sin, but God gave man the authority to use death to punish murderers. Not as vigilantes, but in an orderly, judicial way. God gave man authority to establish a system of justice. They do so as God’s representative, God punishes evildoers through the governmental authorities. The Apostle Peter reiterates that truth. “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.” 1 Peter 2:13-14. So Governments are established by God for your good, to protect you from violence and from harm and danger.

Since God gives Governments for our good, we ought to be thankful for our Government. Yet we usually hear more complaining about the government than praise and thanks. We have probably heard more complaining and done more complaining about the government in the last year and a half with the Covid 19 pandemic. We complain about wearing masks. We complain about not being able to travel, or gather in groups. We complained when we couldn’t go to restaurants, or movies or to the gym. But the government was just trying to carry out their role of protecting us. They are trying to protect us from an invisible enemy so it is not always clear what is the best way to do so. You know, in the last year and a half there have been those who complain that the government is not doing enough and those who complain that the government is doing too much. No matter what they do, people complain.

That’s hardly giving the honor and submission that God requires in our text? “Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.” Notice we are to do this “for conscience’ sake,” for if we dishonor God’s representatives we are dishonoring God.

It is also troubling to see how this has caused people to turn against each other. There has been more animosity and distrust of each other over these Covid restrictions and over vaccinations than anything else that I have seen for a while.

We have so much to be thankful for and to praise God in regard to our government. When you think of the rights and freedoms that we have and the peace that we enjoy, it is truly incredible. There have been few people in the history of the world who have enjoyed the peace and prosperity and especially the freedom of religion that we have. In the past few months we have been reminded of that even more vividly. With the military Coup in Myanmar a few months ago, our brothers and sisters are living in fear and danger and struggle to obtain basic needs of life like food and water. Even more recently with the take over of the Taliban in Afghanistan Christians are in grave danger for their lives. Thank God indeed for the government that we have and pray for those who live under tyrannical governments.

That raises another interesting question. With all the tyrannical governments over the years, can we really say that all the governments that exist “are appointed by God?” The prophet Daniel said, “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings.” Dan. 2:20-21 And then a few verses later, Daniel told king Nebuchadnezzar, who was a rather ruthless man and had crushed many nations including Judah, “The God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory.” Dan. 2:37 So yes, every government, even the cruel and harsh ones are “appointed by God.” Make no mistake about it, God is not the author of their evil. And God does not desire or condone their evil. He condemns it! Yet even those wicked governments receive their power and authority from God AND they are His servant. He is able to use them to carry out His will.

Our Scripture readings gave two examples of how God used the cruel, evil governments and rulers to carry out His will. God had decreed, “Israel must go into exile,” Amos 7:11 because of

their long standing rebellion against God. God used the Assyrians to carry that out as a call to repentance. In the case of John the Baptist being beheaded, John himself had said about Jesus, “He must increase, I must decrease.” John served an important role in preparing the way for the Lord, but now his work was done and God was ready to receive him into heaven so he didn’t take attention away from Jesus. Herod unwittingly fulfilled that plan.

We can also be confident that God will use the Taliban in some way to carry out His plan. We don’t know how. Perhaps by letting people see and despise their evil beliefs and prepare them to hear the gospel of God’s love and forgiveness. Who knows?

So how does the fact that “the authorities that exist are appointed by God” relate to our upcoming election? Does God somehow manipulate the election to choose the ruler that He wants? No! As we have seen all along in talking about how God is in control, God allows people to make choices for themselves whether good or bad. Then God works with their choices and through their choices. So it is in an election. If the majority of a country trusts God’s word and wants to follow God’s commands, they will choose a ruler and government who shares those morals and will uphold them and God will bless them through that. However, if the majority of the people no longer believe in God and do not want to submit to God’s commands, they will likely choose a ruler or a government that gives them the freedom to disregard God’s commands and pass laws that allow abortion, gay marriage, euthanasia, etc. etc. etc.

That is why it is so important for Christians to vote. That is also why the moral issues are more important than other things like the financial plan or the foreign policy. God says, “Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.” Prov. 14:34 A nation that generally abides by God’s commands will be blessed. So get out and vote, and even more importantly pray for our government as Paul urges us to do, “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.” 1 Tim. 2:2 Especially in our day pray for our government that we will continue to have the freedom of religion to be able to worship God in peace and spread the good news of salvation to all.

Finally and most importantly of all, we see that Jesus was always perfectly submissive to the government of His day. In a country where the ruling class were hypocritical enemies of God, Jesus submitted and gave honor to them, even while speaking out against their false religious hypocrisy. Jesus taught the people to do what they say, because they did proclaim God’s law, but not to do as they do. In a nation where the people hated to be under power and rule of Rome, Jesus taught the people to “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Matt. 22:21

In doing so, Jesus gives us an example of how we are to submit to our government, and give honor to our government as God’s representatives even while we speak the truth in love against the abuses and laws of our land that do contradict God’s Word. But of course Jesus is so much more than an example. He obeyed God’s command to submit to the government, even the government which wrongfully put Him to death, and He did that for us and for our salvation. His perfect obedience is what God credits to our account. And then His innocent suffering and death was to pay the penalty for all the times that we have not submitted to or honored our government the way we should. He saved us from all our sinfulness and made us a part of God’s eternal kingdom.

As long as we are on this earth, may we honor God by honoring the governing authorities and being subject to them. For they are **God’s Minister for you.** May we thank God that He protects us and provides an environment where we can make a living and prosper and especially where we can worship Him freely, all through the government that He has appointed for us. May we also pray earnestly for the Christians in those nations where they do not have the freedoms which we enjoy. May God strengthen, comfort and keep them and let His glory be seen. Amen.