

## Government Authority

23 December 2004

"It has been said that all Government is an evil. It would be more proper to say that the necessity of any Government is a misfortune. This necessity however exists; and the problem to be solved is, not what form of Government is perfect, but which of the forms is least imperfect." --James Madison

Politics and religion seem to be the most commonly and passionately discussed topics among the inhabitants of this entire planet. However, most, or perhaps all would agree that some form of government is needed, yet ideas about the kind and mode of operation is as different as are people's ideas about religion. How does a, supposedly Christian nation, such as the United States, reach the place where devout Christians have become apathetic toward government, or immoral in their actions, and in church and community responsibilities? Why do people who believe in separation of church and state, think that national leadership should not pray publicly, or even mention God? Why do professed Christians think free speech means allowing pornography on TV, radio or in printed material? In the past few decades I have seen national religious leaders and local pastors exposed for adultery, sex orientation, theft, fraud and other things, and yet, people still follow and support them. I am not condemning, just questioning peoples way of thinking and how they perceive God.

When I compare what is happening just in this nation today, with some of the history recorded in the Bible, I can come to only one conclusion - **2 Tim 3:1-5**: *1 But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. 2 For [mankind] shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; 5 holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power therefore. From these also turn away. (American Standard)*

Political leaders, i.e. government, are not the root of the overall problems in this nation today. It is the churches and religious leaders, and they are described accurately by Timothy. Are 100% of the religious leaders bad? I don't think so, and nor do I think every person who professes to be a Christian, Muslim, Hindu, etc. are all bad either. I do believe the majority are not taking responsibility to live up to what is called the "Golden Rule": Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I see the government of this nation as merely manifesting the general attitude of the majority of its people. So, how should the sincere minority relate to government and its leaders, even when they know it is corrupt? This too, can be one of those passionate discussions. However, I would just like to share a few Bible verses and personal comments.

**Dan 2:20-21**: *20. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: 21. And he changes the times and the seasons: he removes kings, and sets up kings: he gives wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: Daniel served a hot headed dictator who was responsible for merging all kinds of religious ideas into his kingdom. Yet, Daniel did not form, or get involved with a militia, or choose any other form of rebellion against the government of his day. Instead, he patiently served as a government official along side other corrupt officials, and trusted God, being obedient to the God given principles he was taught, and as he understood them. He exercised his freedom of conscience for good. Notice what Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar's grandson years later: **Dan 5:18-19**: *18. O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor: 19. And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.* Three of Daniel's companions took personal responsibility to serve God according to*

their own understanding of who they were to worship. As a result, the king attempted to destroy them (Dan 3). How many of us trust the love of God enough today, to face death? These men certainly could have hidden themselves until they could gather others to revolt against the king for dictating how and what they were to worship. But they did not; instead they trusted God and were delivered. There is another example hundreds of years later, that happen in a place called Jerusalem.

**John 19:10-11:** *10 Pilate therefore said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" 11 Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore he who delivered me to you has the greater sin."* (Revised Standard) The three Hebrews in Daniel's day were delivered, but Jesus was killed. And yet, each of them trusted God and understood that every government's power and authority come only from God. We need to think seriously about what the scriptures teach, and what we should be doing as members of this nation. Take a look at some other references pertaining to government.

**Rom 13:1-8:** *1. Let every soul be subject unto the higher [authorities]. For there is no [authority] but of God: the [authorities] that be are ordained of God. 2. Whosoever therefore resists the [authority], resists the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the [authority]? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: [exousia - 1849: power coming more from delegated authority and choice, as opposed to dunamis - 1411, power more from inherent strength and ability]*

**1 Pet 2:13-16:** *13 Be subject, then, to every human creation, because of the Lord, whether to a king, as the highest, 14 whether to governors, as to those sent through him, for punishment, indeed, of evil-doers, and a praise of those doing good; 15 because, so is the will of God, doing good, to put to silence the ignorance of the foolish men; 16 as free, and not having the freedom as the cloak of the evil, but as servants of God.* (Young's Bible)

**Titus 3:1-2:** *1 Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work, 2 to speak evil of no man, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men.* (American Standard)

I do not agree with every decision made by public officials, and especially I do not agree with the conduct of many of them. However, I believe that the leaders of this nation generally reflect the people's moral attitudes. If we want government to change, then every individual needs to accept the personal responsibility of allowing God to make them in his image, so that we practice what we preach. Surveys reveal statistically, that 90% of the people in the U.S. believe in God. What if these people practiced the "Golden Rule?" What a change we would see within this nation, and in the U.S.'s reputation among other nations of the world!

I learned many years ago (not soon enough) that children learn mostly by what they see, and not by what they hear. Our heavenly Father set the supreme example. He could not literally die for us, so he did the next best thing - He sent his only son to die in our behalf - not because some law had to be satisfied, moreover, God so loved the world that he gave his only son. The Son so loved the inhabitants of the world that he gave his life.

Obeying governments is a moral choice which has more to do with obedience to God rather than man, and it would behoove us to obey God, trusting that he is in control of the principles and authorities he has ordained. Am I advocating implicit trust in and obedience to every government decree? I am advocating

trusting God, and train your conscience to listen to him alone. There may come a time when what the government demands goes against liberty of conscience, but God will be there in time of need. **2 Cor 5:18-20:** *18 and all things are of the God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and given to us the ministry of that reconciliation: 19 how that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their offences; and putting in us the word of that reconciliation. 20 On Christ's behalf therefore we come as ambassadors, God, as it were, making entreaty through our lips: we, on Christ's behalf, beseech men to be reconciled to God. (Darby's Bible)*

Now, here is the quote with which we began this study. Perhaps you might see more depth to the statement this time:

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