

The Christian and the Government

Introduction:

1. Our nation has just weathered a long, sometimes very ugly Presidential campaign. Regardless of the ultimate results, we had reason to believe that millions would be unhappy with the outcome.
2. All of this has caused many conscientious Christians to wonder about their relationship with, and their responsibilities toward, the civil authorities, or toward the government.
3. Suffice it to say, to an extent far greater than we often realize, we are continually interacting with the government in our lives. We pay taxes -- sales taxes, income taxes, property taxes, school taxes, federal taxes, state taxes, local taxes. If we remodel our house, we have to get a permit, if we drive a car we must get a driver's license, if we own a car we must have it licensed and registered, etc., etc., ad. Inf.
4. As a Christian, I have a dual citizenship.
 - a. A citizen of the United States.
 - b. But my real citizenship is in heaven! Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:19.
 - (1) I have responsibilities in both realms, but since God is sovereign, my relationship to Him must take priority over my responsibilities to the civil authorities.
5. Both citizenships provide blessings.
 - a. My national citizenship – protection and freedom, Rom. 13:3-4; Acts 16:37.
 - b. My heavenly citizenship – “*all spiritual blessings*,” Eph. 1:3.
6. Both citizenships are accompanied with responsibilities.
 - a. My national citizenship – the object of this lesson.
 - b. My heavenly citizenship – Matt. 6:33; I Cor. 10:31; Tit. 2:12; Rev. 2:10, etc.

Discussion:

I. Important Facts to Remember:

- A. God Rules in the Kingdoms of Men!
 1. Daniel 4:17, 32.
 2. John 19:10-11.
 3. Job 12:23; Ps. 22:28.
- B. God Has used Evil men in High places to accomplish his Purpose.
 1. Jeremiah 25:8-12.
 - a. God called Nebuchadnezzar “*My servant*,” Jer. 25:9
- C. Morality influences the life span of nations.
 1. The world before the flood, Gen. 6:5,7.
 2. Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 18:20; 19:24.
 3. Israel, Judah, Assyria, Babylon, Moab, Edom, etc.
 4. Consider 2 Kings 24:3,4; 2 Chron. 28:19.
 5. Observe: The shedding of “*innocent blood*” contributed greatly to the fall of Judah, 2 Kings 24:3-4. This should cause concern for the future of our nation – especially in view of the number of abortions performed in the U.S. Since 1973. The number of “*innocent*” babies slain while still in their mother's womb, exceeds the combined populations of Indiana, Michigan, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Missouri, Idaho, and Colorado!
- D. Faithful children of God have been very active in the affairs of nations.
 1. Joseph in Egypt, Gen. 41:43.
 2. Moses in Egypt, Exodus 5:1.
 3. Nehemiah was cupbearer to the king, Neh. 1:11.
 4. Queen Esther had great influence for good on King Ahasuerus, Esther 4:14; 5:1-14.
 5. Jonah greatly influence the people of Ninevah, Jonah 3:2; Matt. 12:41.
 6. John the Baptist preached to Herod, Matt. 14:3-4.
 7. Paul stood before Felix, Acts 24:25; Festus and Agrippa, Acts 26:28.
- E. God Instituted Government for the good of the citizens.
 1. Romans 13:3-4.

II. Some Duties of Christians to the Government.

- A. Romans 13:1-7.
 1. Be submissive, Rom. 13:1; I Peter 2:13-14.
 - a. Because rulers have been appointed by God, Rom. 13:4.
 2. Pay taxes, Romans 13:6; Matt. 22:17-21.
 - a. And other fees that are due, Rom. 13:7.

3. Pay Respect, Rom. 13:7; I Peter 2:17.
 - a. Certain of the authorities may not be worthy of respect, but pay respect anyway because of the office they hold.
4. Why Submit and pay respect?
 - a. To have the approval of the civil authorities, Rom. 13:3.
 - b. *"For conscience sake,"* Rom. 13:5.
- B. I Tim. 2:1-2.
 1. Pray for the authorities.
 - a. *"...that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,"* I Tim. 2:2.
 - b. *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God..."* I Tim. 2:3.
- C. Titus 3:1-2.
 1. *"Be subject to..."* v. 1.
- D. I Peter 2:13-14.
 1. Submit.
 2. Why?
 - a. *"For the Lord's sake,"* v. 13.
 - b. That you *"may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men,"* v. 15.
- E. I Peter 2:17.
 1. Honor.
 2. Not because the individual is honorable, but out of respect for the office.

III. Justifiable Reason not to Submit.

- A. Not just because the Government may be Oppressive.
 1. Consider the government when Paul and Peter wrote, Rom. 13:1; I Peter 2:13.
 - a. The government then was very oppressive. Nero was on the throne!
 - b. Both Peter and Paul became martyrs for the cause of Christ.
 - c. The church must not be "a flag-waving protest voice for government change."
- B. When the Government tries to force us to violate God's laws.
 1. Note Daniel 3:1-18, and Daniel 6:1-10.
 2. Note Acts 4:18-20; 5:27-29.

IV. What We Can do to make our government better.

- A. Pray for the leaders.
 1. I Tim. 2:1-2.
- B. Vote.
 1. We as citizens have a legal right to vote.
 2. Vote your conscience, not your party.
 - a. God is not a Democrat, Republican, or Independent.
- C. Write Letters .
 1. Esther was able to talk to the king; we are able to write to our nation's leaders.
- D. Live Right!
 1. Matt. 5:13,16; Phil. 2:15; Tit. 2:12; Rev. 2:10.

Conclusion:

1. We, as a people have been highly blessed, largely because our nation was founded upon "Judeo-Christian" principles. But we have come a long way from those fundamental moral and biblical principles which guided our nation's founders when our Constitution was written.
2. We are destined to fall as a nation, unless somehow we begin again to look to God and His word. And who is better able to help bring this about than faithful New Testament Christians.
3. Properly understood, Christians are the best citizens in a nation! Cf. Jer. 29:4-7. Each of us might well ponder the question Mordecai asked Esther, *"who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this,"* Esther 4:14.
4. All nations will ultimately fall, but there is a kingdom which will stand forever! Heb. 12:28. And, by the grace of God, through obedience to His gospel, (thereby being born again, John 3:5), **you** can become a citizen of that kingdom.

--Bobby Witherington, Nov. 20, 2016, p.m.