

CHAPTER 16 – THE BELIEVER AND GOVERNMENT

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help the believer see his responsibility in differing spheres of authority and to be able to live a balanced lifestyle, keeping allegiance to each in proper perspective.

Key Verse:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Romans 13:1-2 (KJV)

I. What areas of Government have been established by God to help maintain order and bring His Eternal Purpose to fulfilment?

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and, having done so, declared His purpose to have a man in His image who would be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth for divine purposes.

To help accomplish this purpose, God established three human institutes. All authority starts, first, with God. It is then distributed to whomever God wills.

- a. The family (Genesis 2: 18 – 24). God established the family as a context in which man would realize the eternal purpose for which he was created. The family is the God-ordained context for the establishment and development of:
 1. God-centered relationship and fellowship;
 2. God-like character in man;
 3. God-ordained ministry and function;
 4. Natural and spiritual reproduction.

- b. The civil government (Genesis 12: 1 – 6; John 19: 1). God established government for the purpose of giving order to society. Civil government would do this through the following means:
 1. Punishing the wicked (Romans 13: 3 – 4).
 2. Supporting and honouring good behaviour (Ecclesiastes 8: 11; Psalms 72: 4, 12 – 14).

- c. The church (Matthew 16: 18 – 19). God established the church, or the assembly of the saints, to be his spokesman in the earth, the equipper of the house and the conscience to the nation to see God's purpose fulfilled.

II. What is God's Relationship to these Established Institutions?

While each of these institutions is given tremendous liberty by God to function within their spheres, it is clear that:

- a. God holds supreme authority over all (Daniel 4: 34 – 35; Matthew 28: 18).
- b. God will call all to give an account (Matthew 25: 14 – 30).
- c. Governments are all servants of God to do His will (Romans 13: 4).

III. What areas of involvement do not belong to Civil Government?

God has given to each institution certain responsibilities to fulfil. To the civil authorities He has given the judicial responsibility of upholding right and punishing evil, as God defines it. In addition, it can be seen that God supported the right of the civil authorities to raise an army for military defence (1 Samuel 8: 11 – 12, 20, 22). But there are many areas in which God has not given authority to the state:

- a. The state is not to be involved in corruptions, using their office for gain and exploiting the people (Deuteronomy 16: 19; 17: 16 – 17; 1 Kings 12).
- b. The state is not responsible for the raising and educating of children. This is clearly a parental responsibility (Genesis 18: 19; Exodus 12: 12; Proverbs 22: 6; Ephesians 6: 4).
- c. The state is not responsible for welfare and the care of the aged, widows and orphans. This responsibility is clearly given to the individual, the family and, ultimately, the church (1 Corinthians 16: 1 – 2; Job 29: 11 – 16; 31: 5 – 22; 2 Timothy 5: 4 – 10).

Sometimes, a government will overstep its jurisdiction. At that point, each person must determine how they believe they must respond to each action or whether any response is required at all. The Christian must always maintain a biblical balance in these areas. The Bible teaches us to be submissive to the ruling authorities over us; yet, at the same time, we must hold our obedience to God above that (Romans 13: 1 – 4; Acts 5: 28 – 29).

IV. In what ways should the Christians be involved in the affairs of civil government?

Every believer has the responsibility of properly relating to all forms of government in the home, the church and society. In the civil government realm a good Christian citizen involves himself in the following:

- a. Praying regularly for all in authority (2 Timothy 2: 1 – 2).

- b. Giving due honour and respect to authorities at all times (Romans 13: 7).
- c. Submitting to the decisions of the state so long as they do not require us to sin and, thus, violate God's higher law (1 Peter 2: 13 – 14).
- d. Voting in all state and local elections (Matthew 5: 13 – 14; Ezekiel 3: 16 – 21).
- e. Paying taxes as required by law (Matthew 22: 17 – 21; Romans 13: 7).
- f. Lifting a public voice expressing concerns (Matthew 5: 13 – 14; Ezekiel 3: 16 – 21).
- g. Being informed and understanding public issues (Ephesians 5: 15 – 16; 2 Corinthians 2: 11).
- h. Being informed about the political system of one's nation (Acts 16: 37; 22: 25).
- i. Running for political office in a system that allows it.

Conclusion

God is the only one who has the authority to rule over men (Psalms 25: 7). However, God delegates His authority to whomever He wills in order to see His purposes established in the earth (Daniel 5: 21). God expects all men to cooperate with those whom He has given authority insofar as those authorities do not use their authority to force those under their charge to violate the direct Word of God. All Christians should be model citizens when it comes to obeying the law, paying their taxes and being involved in the political process. All Christians should pray daily that the purposes of God would be established through the governments that are placed over them.