

MESSAGE: HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS VOTE?

GOD AND GOVERNMENT

SUGGESTED PASSAGE: Romans 13:1-7 (NASB)

"Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³ For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴ for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷ Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is *due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message on God and Government is to share with the audience the basic principles underlying God's establishing of government, His four realms of government, and how He aligns Himself with government.

INTRODUCTION:

Many, if not most, Christians begin with the wrong question of who they should vote for rather than the more important question of how they should vote. Asking the correct question is fundamental to knowing how to arrive at the correct answer.

If you were to come to me with your personal life in shambles and you didn't know which way to turn, and you said, "Pastor, help me," I would open up my Bible, identify the cause of your personal dilemma, and speak God's truth about your situation—giving you God's resolution for whatever it is that you are facing.

If you were to come to me with your family life in shambles with both you and your spouse facing difficulties and you said, "Pastor, help me," again I would open up my Bible, identify the

cause of your familial dilemma, and present to you God's solution for whatever it is that you are facing.

If the elders or leadership of this church would come to me because this church was in shambles, everyone was arguing, and this congregation was confused, and they said, "Pastor, help us," I would open the very same Bible that I used to help the individual and the family, and I would identify the cause for the chaos based on the Word of God, seeking to prescribe biblical solutions for the calamity in your church.

In other words, Scripture would not only solve the individual and family divisions, but it would also solve the ecclesiastical confusion. This is because Scripture holds the final and authoritative answer on all of life's concerns. In fact, every question facing us today has two answers: God's answer and everyone else's. And when those two differ, everyone else is wrong.

Yet where do we often go for answers as a nation when there is chaos in our country? Where do we turn for solutions when we are experiencing moral, social, and economic decline at a rate that is able to destroy our country before our youngest generation even has a chance to grow up? What do we do when divisions, debt, and our own internal protests across our land threaten what little stability we have left?

What most Christians do, unfortunately, is change books. When it comes to politics and elections, far too many Christians spend more time appealing to family, history and tradition, culture, racial expediency, and personal preference than they do to what the Bible teaches. While Scripture is good enough for individuals, families, and churches, it seems that somehow it has been deemed insufficient for how we respond to politics and government.

Yet the same book that can restore a person, home, or church is the very same book that can restore and transform our nation. We don't need to change books. In fact, it is precisely because we have changed books that the chaos in our country has gotten worse than ever before.



Since the Christian's belief system or worldview is to be derived from the Bible, then out of necessity it should inform our politics and therefore should inform our vote.

SERMON POINTS:

1. GOVERNMENT AS A DIVINE INSTITUTION

- Every person is subject to governing authorities.
Scripture: Romans 13:1
- No authority exists apart from God or that was not established or allowed by God.
- If there is no government and no authority apart from God, than you cannot discuss government without bringing God into the discussion.
- That doesn't mean that the people filling the positions within the governing authorities are intentionally serving God or that their decisions are in line with God— because many, if not most, are not. But the institution of governmental authority has been created, decreed, and established by God underneath His sovereign control.

2. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

- The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all" (Psalm 103:19). In Daniel, it says that "the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind" (Daniel 4:17) and that "it is Heaven that rules" (Daniel 4:26).
- In His sovereignty, God has allowed mankind to serve as representatives within His governing systems, for good or for bad.
- God never forces obedience to His rule. As the supreme ruler, He has allowed the freedom to obey or disobey according to mankind's choices within the sovereign lines of His boundaries.
- Freedom means you get to control the choice, but because God is the sovereign ruler over His creation you don't get to control the consequences.
 - Disobedient decisions will result in consequences that are oftentimes inherent in the very activity itself (Romans 1:18–27).
 - God only promises to bless the nation that recognizes His authority (Psalm 33:12).

3. FOUR SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT

- **SELF-GOVERNMENT**
The goal of self-government is to govern oneself according to the principles and precepts found in God's law. When individuals are living life in light of an attitude of self-government, then there is less of a need for anyone or anything else to govern them.
Scripture: Ecclesiastes 12:13,14
- **FAMILY**
God established the family as the foundation of civilization. The Bible tells us that Christ is the head of the husband, and the husband is the head of the wife, and that parents are the head over their children.
Scripture: Genesis 1:26-28, Ephesians 5:23, 1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 6:1
- **CHURCH**
The church leaders, as members of the ecclesia (the governing body set up by Jesus Christ on His behalf), are to govern matters that apply to the church and/or church members, and serve as the moral conscience of the government. This role is crucial since the progress of a nation is directly related to the state of its morality.
Scripture: Proverbs 14:34
- **CIVIL GOVERNMENT**
Civil government is that system that has been set in place to create and maintain a righteous and just environment in which freedom can flourish. It is a representative system designed to manage society in an orderly fashion. Yet it is to do so without interfering with, negating, or contradicting God's other governing agencies. Civil government is to support, not replace, the institutions of family and church government so that self-government, and therefore maximum freedom, can be experienced.
Scripture: Romans 13

4. OVERARCHING ROLE OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

- Under God, the government is to promote the conditions for the well-being of the citizenry for good, while protecting the citizenry against the proliferation of evil.
- Government is to restrict the flow of evil while simultaneously and intentionally seeking to expand the flow of good. *Scripture: Romans 13:3,4*

5. INTENDED OUTCOME OF A BIBLICALLY-BASED GOVERNMENT

- The primary intended outcome of a properly functioning civil government is freedom.
- Freedom can be defined as a *release from illegitimate bondage in order to make the choice to exercise responsibility in actualizing and maximizing all that you were created to be.*
- Civil government exists to promote personal and collective freedom through resisting evil and overseeing the proliferation of good through maintaining a just society. *Scripture: Genesis 2:16*
- The closer God is to the society, the more ordered it becomes. The further God is from the society, the more chaos it experiences. *Scripture: 2 Chronicles 15:3-6*

6. WHAT SIDE IS GOD ON?

- Answer: His own. *Scripture: Joshua 5*

As Joshua prepared to go to war against the city of Jericho, a representative of God's army approached him. Joshua then asked him a very practical and strategic question. The paraphrase,

"Whose side are you on? Are you on our side or are you on their side?" Or, as we might phrase it in light of our discussion, "Are you a Democrat or a Republican?"

The commander of the Lord's army gave what is one of the most politically insightful principles in Scripture when he replied, paraphrased,

"Neither. I'm not on your side and I'm not on their side. I'm on God's side."

The captain of the host of the Lord made it clear that he hadn't come to take sides. He had come to take over. He was not on Joshua's side, yet neither was he on Jericho's side.

- Joshua could have easily assumed that he would have sided with him, since Joshua was on the side

- of the chosen people of God.
- He did not align himself with Joshua's agenda nor with Jericho's. He aligned himself with a whole other agenda, that of God's kingdom.
- Sometimes that would play out in Joshua's favor, as in the battle at Jericho. Yet sometimes that would not play out in favor of Joshua, as in the battle of Ai.
- When people ask you how you are going to vote in any upcoming election, your answer shouldn't be, "I'm going to vote with this side" or "I'm going to vote with that side." Your answer ought to be, "I'm voting with God because He has His own side. I am going to vote for the party, person, or platform that best represents God's values to advance His kingdom."

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

SOVEREIGNTY: The boundary lines of God's sovereignty are the non-negotiable areas He has established. It is similar to the boundary lines in a football game. In between the boundary lines on the football field, there is given the freedom to call the plays. Likewise, God has given mankind the freedom to make decisions on the field of life.

GOVERNMENT OUTSIDE OF BIBLICAL BOUNDARIES: When the government tries to act as someone's parent and pay someone's bills while they do not work, the government has become more than the government was designed to be. The Bible says if a man does not work, he ought not to eat (2 Thessalonians 3:6-8, 10). God restricts the church from giving charity to people prior to getting the family involved first (1 Timothy 5:4), likewise civil government is not to provide charity prior to the involvement of the family, church, and other local charitable entities. This is so because help is to be given by those closest related to the need who can provide both love and accountability that promotes personal freedom and responsibility.

TAKING SIDES: In every football game, two teams battle head to head in combat in order to win a victory. For sixty minutes they war against each other in order to declare to the world which team is the greatest. But what most people don't recognize is that in every football game, there aren't just two teams out on the field. In fact, in every football game taking place in every football stadium throughout our land, there are three teams who participate.



There is the home team. There is the visiting team. And then there is the team of officials. Two of the teams in this battle have the same desire—to win. But in order to win, they have to go after different goals. These two teams use various strategies and various plays to try to accomplish their goal.

Yet in the middle of everything, there is a team of men wearing black and white jerseys whose role it is to govern this war. This third team doesn't take sides with either of the teams in the battle. If they did, they would be disqualified from what they have been put there to do.

This third team is not committed to either team—rather, they owe their allegiance to a higher entity: the League Office of the NFL. This league office has set forth the rules, guidelines, and regulations by which both teams are to carry out their battle. It is the job of the third team to operate in the midst of these competing parties to carry out the intentions and governance of the NFL.

Whatever this third team decides and says overrules both teams. This is because this unique group has an allegiance that holds an ultimately greater office of authority than the two competing parties.

Yet if an official happened to be too much of a fan of one of the two teams so that his allegiance kept him from being an objective official on the field, thus not representing the larger umbrella under which he was to operate, he would have compromised his position. Likewise, if an official chose to rule apart from the governances and guidelines of the league office of the NFL, he would not be backed by the authority of that office. His authority to influence is only as strong as his alignment with that which sits above him.

One of the great tragedies in the church of Jesus Christ today is that we have lost our ability and authority to be an influence on those around us. We have lost this because we have divided and aligned ourselves with the politics of men. Rather than be the third team with the power from and allegiance to a whole other King and kingdom, believers have taken sides with the two teams on the field. Believers have allowed political expedience to override the kingdom of God.

God has not given His allegiance to any party. His allegiance belongs to Himself—His Word, principles, and truth. As a follower of Jesus Christ, you represent His kingdom as well in whatever political capacity you choose to position yourself.



HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS VOTE VIDEO: Included in your packet is the video "How Should Christians Vote." This video can also be found at <https://vimeo.com/39439372>.

SERMON LINES:

God is in charge, and alone sits as the ultimate government over all society.

This sermon is designed to inform you so that when you walk in the voting booth, you are casting an educated vote as closely aligned to God's Word as you can.

My sermon today is not designed to get you to vote for any one party or candidate. In fact, there are people in here today who will vote for different candidates.

This sermon isn't designed to make you feel good. It is not designed to make you flip a pew or throw your hands in the air. Sometimes God's Word makes us feel good, but sometimes His Word steps on our toes. When that happens, that doesn't mean we change His Word. His Word holds the final authority on all that we do, whether we like it or not.

QUOTES BY DR. TONY EVANS:

"Since government and authority have been established by God, government is a divine institution. The problem is that people don't want the Divine in the institution."

"God is not a Democrat nor a Republican. He doesn't ride the backs of donkeys or elephants."

"God is not a Democrat nor a Republican. He didn't come to take sides. He came to take over."

"Many people want "God bless America" today. They just don't want "One nation under God." The issue is that you can't have one without the other."

ANONYMOUS QUOTE:

The saga of a nation is the saga of its families written large.