

Mixing Politics and Christianity – Biblical Truth for Volatile Times

politikos is the Greek word for *politics*, the origin of which is credited to Aristotle in ~350 BC. It simply meant *affairs of state*. It had to do with working things out for the common good of the people. That is, after all, the purpose of government is it not? Abraham Lincoln quoting Jesus,

“If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.” (Mark 3: 24)

Divided is the operative word. Not since the '60s has this nation experienced such violence and destruction. People have been murdered during protests against the violence that took other lives. Rioting, burning, and looting replaced any attempt at lawful, peaceful protests. In a number of cities, there is ongoing anarchy and chaos as people with political views that would destroy our nation are allowed to do what they want all in the name of *freedom*.

Police are attacked and disdained amidst a cry to defund them. Many of those elected officials fail miserably doing their jobs to uphold peace, protect their citizens, and, worse, they prevent others, who could help, from doing so. This did not happen overnight. This is *progressive*?

Over the last five decades, very sadly to many, our nation has become more and more *tolerant*, even supportive, of actions and activities the Bible clearly points to as sin and defiance of God.

Laws were passed that legalize atrocities and actions the Bible decries as sin—directly and arrogantly defying Jehovah God our Creator.

Most notably—abortion and same sex marriage. The fallout from both create more issues.

The works of satan and demonic forces are obvious to all who understand biblical teachings. (ref. Jesus, the Apostles John, Paul, and Peter) And I have bad news for you—it only gets worse. These forces know their days are numbered (so are ours) as we move closer to the events of the Apocalypse (Greek word for *revelation* which literally means *uncovering*). So throughout the world, including the United States, there will be more intense violence, disasters, interference in governments, and persecution of Christians.

All of this begs the question, where do Christians and our churches stand in all of this? What is our role? Is it active or passive? You know the old saying, "*you can't mix politics and religion*". Is that true or do we try? Today we drill down into several clear, but difficult, passages to help answer those questions. I know, and warn you, that some from all *political* persuasions will disagree—some strongly. But biblical truth is just that—Truth. And sometimes we do not like it because it disagrees with what we *thought* was right or how we *think* it should be.

What the Bible says about governments and authorities.

Three passages are cited when any biblically-based discussion of this subject take center stage.

Romans 13: 1-7; 1 Peter 2: 13-17; Titus 3: 1- 5

"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. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. 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; 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. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. 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." Romans 13: 1-7

[Some believe the verses in red allow those under evil leadership to do what it takes to get out from under or throw off the tyranny. This was part of the argument for the American Revolution according to history. Christians and pastors were in a bit of a conundrum because of these verses.]

We must remember that Paul was often in prison when he wrote. He wrote Romans while under the rule of the maniacal emperor Nero, who would soon have him beheaded.]

"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. for such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the (emperor) king." 1 Peter 2: 13-17

Peter lived at the same time Paul did and was also put to death (crucifixion) by Nero.

"Remind them to be subject to rulers (Nero who beheaded him), to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. For we also once

were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” Titus 3: 1-5

Key points to remember:

- From 586 BC–1948 no independent sovereign nation of Israel. God allowed (caused) them to be destroyed and taken captive because of their disobedience and idol worship.
- Throughout the New Testament, the Jews were subjects under Roman rule. Emperors in Rome had ultimate authority. Locally there were governors. Within the Jews, there were high priests and pharisees. The Jews and Christians both held God was the ultimate authority; yet both were under much human authority—some of it very oppressive.
- Paul and Peter agreed, in very similar words, that human government was established by God *for the good of the people*. We know it did not always turn out that way, yet even when they were persecuted, neither mentioned disobeying or revolting. Just the opposite.
- We are also told vengeance is the Lord’s—not ours. In His timing, God will remove all evil people from authority over His people. *Timing* is the hard part for many. This verse is a glimpse into a reason, but God is not accountable to us. We are accountable to Him.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55: 8-9

That was then...this is now. Does that still apply?

The answer is YES, but...

A number of times in the Old Testament, we read of God's people disobeying the king or authority. Two New Testament examples are often cited. These verses reveal the **common denominator**—the one reason Christians must disobey government or civil authority.

"But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." Acts 4: 18-20

"We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered,

"We must obey God rather than men." Acts 5: 28-29

That is the key. If Christians are ordered to do anything contrary to the teachings of God's Word, we must not comply—rather we obey God. And we must be ready to suffer the consequences as early Christians did (including all the apostles except Judas) and many persecuted ones do today around the world. They die for their Jesus! Will you?

Four things every biblical Christian must do to live biblically in a political world:

Submit (Obey) to government authorities (and show respect for them) as long as you do not have to disobey God's Word in doing so. First and foremost, we obey God always submitting to His authority, whether we understand or agree with it.

(Jesus) "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."

Luke 22: 42

(Jesus) *"If you love Me, you will keep (obey) My commandments."* John 14: 15

Love Of course we love God first and best. Then comes the hard part.

"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" Matthew 5: 43-46

Love speaks Truth. The best way we can *love our enemies* is to attempt to introduce them to Christ.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." John 13: 34

Pray

- For ourselves. *"I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; and You forgave the guilt of my sin."* Psalm 32:5
- For each other. *"...pray for one another..."* from James 5: 16
- For our enemies. Jesus told us to pray for our enemies in the verses above.
- For leaders (good and evil). *"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made...for kings and all who are in high positions,"*2 Timothy 2: 1-2a

Vote

The great, Daniel Webster said,

"It is, Sir, the people's Constitution, the people's Government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people."

Our government in the U.S. is different from that in the Bible. There were no elected officials. Our constitution states we the people are the authority. We assign that to others to represent what we want by voting in elections. This is one way Christians can biblically stand against leaders in authority that may not be asking us directly to personally go against God, but they do. We vote against those who hold anti-Christian and biblical values and principles—that is not just a right, it is a must. We vote for those who hold them if able.

For you, I pray the Holy Spirit will *give you grace to submit, mercy to forgive as we have been forgiven, ability to extend love to those no more unlovely to God than we once were.* God save America.

For Christ's sake,

Walter