

October 27, 2020

Words of challenge for all of us today.

The Christian imperative to live in faithful response to Jesus is very often obfuscated by our own personal (selfish) interests. Nowhere is this truer than in the Christian's response to politics. For example, we will often vote for or against candidates and issues without giving any consideration to what our faith in Jesus would lead us to do.

Consequently, all levels of our government are being populated with people who hold belief in Jesus with contempt and disdain. This is also true of the way we vote on issues and referendums. Christians need to remember our faith in Jesus must inform every aspect of our lives. Our faith is not something which we turn on and off depending upon the people we are with at any given moment. Our faith in Jesus is a way of life not merely a religion. Read with me Romans 13:1-10.

1 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. 8 Owe nothing to anyone

except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9 For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Have you ever contemplated what it means, as a Christian, to be a responsible citizen? It seems as if this would be a relatively simple question to answer, but it never is. It is not easy to answer because we try to inter-mingle our personal desires in with what we know God commands we do. This always makes it difficult to engage the world fully as a child of God.

This letter was written by Paul to the church in Rome. Rome was the center of the Empire's government. Paul wrote to the Church in Rome to provide answers to many questions of theology and doctrine, one of which is "How should Christians interact with government?"

What is the source of a government's authority? In the United States we generally believe government's authority is derived from the people. The Preamble of our Constitution reads, "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." In other countries where dictators rule they claim their authority is established by military might.

Our Scripture reads, "There is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God"(Romans 13:1). It is also true that not all governments after having been established by God seek to do the will of God. When this happens it is right and necessary that

Christian men and women act in faith. Such was the response of our nation's Founding Fathers and Mothers. Unfortunately Christians do not always act so courageously or responsibly. For example the established churches of Germany supported Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party and used our Scripture text to justify their support. Our form of government is unique in that it provides us with the opportunity to have a revolution every year at the ballot box. Moreover, Christians responsible to vote as our faith in Jesus leads us.

Governments also have responsibility to its citizens. Government provides protection for its' citizens. Throughout the Old Testament the rulers of God's people established armies to protect those people entrusted to their care. So it is with our government today. Our Federal government has as its' primary responsibility the protection of the nation's citizens. There are those however, within our government and within the borders of our nation who seek to undermine our security by revealing military secrets and enacting laws that hamstring our military's ability to ensure your protection.

The government exercises judicial punishment of those who violate the civil order. In Leviticus God gave Israel the Law and along with the Law set forth the required punishments for those who violated the Law. These Laws were given, in part, to establish civil order. The first ten of these Laws address directly the relationship between people and God and people to people. Without the effective maintenance of civil order people live in chaos, anarchy, and fear. In Judges we read when there is no government that chaos and anarchy will flourish. Scripture reveals, "In those days there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes" (Judges 17:6 & 21:25). In our nation today we live in a climate of moral relativism and relative truth. We no longer live in a nation where there is a definite right and wrong. In the United States today each person is doing what is right in their own eyes and we

are the weaker and poorer for it and this is because of our spiritually bankrupt lifestyle. Today it seems criminals have more rights than victims. And those who are entrusted with enforcing the law routinely disregard it.

Governments ensure the promotion of the general welfare of the nation's citizens. Our government is mandated from God to ensure the nation's citizens are cared for and provided opportunity to not merely survive but to live well. Among the ways governments accomplish the promotion of our general welfare is by enabling the creation of jobs for the people through industry and other businesses. Currently unemployment is 7.9%. Prior to the pandemic it was much lower. The government in executing its' responsibility to promote general welfare must for people to live in safety so that they can pursue happiness, liberty, and life.

What is the Christian's responsibility to government? In the past 45 years I have heard many people claim that the man who at the time is/was president was not their president. This is absolute rubbish. Regardless of who it is that is president, or governor, or senator, or whatever elected position a person may hold they represent all of us. And therefore as our first responsibility we are obligated as Christian men, women, and young people to pray for them-and not only those of our own country, but also those leaders throughout the world-even those who hate us. Scripture admonishes, "That entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all people, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"(1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Second, Christians must “Submit themselves 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”(1 Peter 2:13-14). The only time when it is right to overthrow an existing government is when that government exists and governs in a way that is contrary to the word and way of God. In our country we have the opportunity to do this every year at election time. The question is whether or not we are voting according to our faith or our personal interests.

Every Christian is obligated to “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s and to God that which is God’s” (Matthew 22:21). In order for the government to function taxes must be collected. The problem is that taxation is never fair. There will always be those who pay no taxes and there will always be those who pay too much. Here again we have direct responsibility in our form of government for determining how we will be taxed by electing people to office who will work on our behalf.

Next Tuesday is election day in the United States. Sadly, many Christians will not vote believing foolishly that they should not be involved in politics. As Christians we have the moral and spiritual obligation to vote our faith and to fail to do so is sin! I challenge all of you who are voters to vote as responsible Christians. Let your vote speak for what you believe to be true about God, Jesus, and the Christian faith. Let us pray!

Gracious God, I pray for our nation and for You to encourage Your people to vote their faith and help begin a new Great Awakening among us. Help us Holy Spirit to see revival again in the USA through Jesus Christ, amen.

Remember as a faithful Christian vote and be a good citizen.

Until the nets are full