

The Consequences of Ideas

Lesson 21: Christian Foundations of Government

What is Justice? What is governmental injustice? What are some examples?

I. Introduction

- a. Government affects our lives daily. It tells us how fast to drive. It regulates our commerce. It protects us from foreign and domestic strife. Yet we rarely take time to consider its true basic function as outlined in the **Word of God**.
- b. Since the Bible does not provide an exhaustive proscription for the way government ought to be, a Christian view of government can not be **rigidly** defined.
- c. The Bible does not speak **directly** to every area of political discussion, so Christians often hold widely differing views of issues arising from political points of view or governmental functioning.
- d. However, Christians are not free to believe whatever they want. One should not abandon the Bible when thinking about these issues because there is a great deal of biblical material that can be used to judge particular political **positions**.

II. In The Beginning

- a. The Old Testament teaches that God established government after the flood in the form of a **theocracy** in which God was the head.
- b. The constitution of Israel was such that all the functions of government were without any **independent** power, and its leaders simply announced and executed the will of God as declared by priests and prophets.
- c. This form of government, however, was for a particular circumstance involving a covenant people chosen by God. This can not apply to us today because **we** are not the inheritors of the promises God made to the nation of Israel.
- d. Apart from that unique situation, the Bible does not propose nor endorse any specific political system. The Bible, however, does provide a basis for evaluating various political **philosophies**.
- e. This is so because a clearly delineated a view of human nature is presented in the Bible and every political theory rests on a particular view of **human nature**.
- f. In order for government to be **compatible** with Christianity it must take a Biblical view of man and acknowledge God's Law.

III. The Limits of Human Government

- a. Scripture describes two elements of human nature. 1.) Man is created in the **image** of God. 2.) As a created being, man possesses the ability to exercise judgment and rationality. This sets man on a higher plane and apart from the rest of creation. Gen. 1:26-27 *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. KJV*
- b. Because it is God who gives life, every human life is to be **valued** as a created gift of God, and that life begins at conception. It is on this basis of creation that the Framers of our Constitution derive our basic rights. *Ps 139:13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. NIV*
- c. As persons created by God, it follows that we are to be **individually** responsible to Him and to keep His commands. Government must therefore respect the principle of individualism and the human duty to obey God. *Rom 2:6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds: KJV*
- d. God has placed certain **spheres** of life under man's individual control and made them man's responsibility. These spheres of life are not to be intruded upon by government.
 1. **Religion/ Church/ God** *Lev 19:37 Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I am the LORD . KJV*
 2. **Family** *Gen 1:27-28 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, KJV*
 3. **Labor** *1 Thess 4:11-12 and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing. KJV*
 4. **Economic well being** *Deut 8:18 But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, KJV*
 5. **Education** *Deut 11:18-19 Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. KJV*
- e. However, humans are also fallen creatures. This human fallenness has created a need to control evil and sinful human behavior. For this purpose God has **ordained** civil government. *Rom 13:3-4 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. KJV*
- f. Therefore, a Christian view of human nature, coupled with the spheres of life which God has assigned to the individual, provides a basis upon which to **judge** various political philosophies.
- g. Essentially, Christians must reject political philosophies which **devalue life**, ignore human sinfulness and excuse human irresponsibility and foster government intrusion into the individual's spheres of responsibility.

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IV. The Flaws in Man's Political Theories

- a. Many utopian political theories are based upon the **flawed** assumption of human perfectibility. In *The Republic*, Plato proposed an ideal government where the enlightened philosopher-kings would lead the people.
- b. Plato's proposed leaders would also be affected by the **Fall**. They would not always have the benevolent and enlightened disposition necessary to lead the republic. *Rom 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, NIV*
- c. Christians should also be wary of any **Statist** design of government because those who adopt the Statist forms reach their philosophical positions and intellectual formulations from such philosophers as G.W.F. Hegel.
- d. Christians must never forget that ideas have consequences and the ideas driving the Statist world view ultimately elevates the State to the **position of god**.
- e. Under Statist forms of government the individual must yield to the collective will; the State becomes the ultimate provider of any and every good thing. Every man is dependent upon the State for all things and there is **no other God**.
- f. Marxism, socialism, fascism, Nazism, progressivism are all forms of government that are built upon the assumption that the State should be supreme over the individual. The ultimate goal of the Statist is control and the perfection of **Utopia**.
- g. Statists can not **tolerate** individualism as that competes with the collective. Neither does free market capitalism survive under Statism because the State must ultimately control all economic activity to ensure equality of outcome for all.
- h. Christians should **reject** the utopian vision of the Statist position because it is based upon an erroneous view of human nature and places no limits on the role of government over God-given spheres of life belonging to the individual.

V. The Responsibilities of Government

- a. Civil government is necessary and divinely ordained by God; it is ultimately **under** God's control. It has been given three political responsibilities: *Rom 13:1 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. KJV*
 1. The sword of order (to thwart **rebellion**), *Rom 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. KJV*
 2. The sword of justice (**to punish** criminals), *Rom 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. KJV*
 3. The power of governance (to **make laws**). *Rom 13:6-7 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. NIV*

VI. Responsibilities Toward Government

- a. As **citizens**, Christians have been given a number of responsibilities with regard to government. They are called to render service and obedience to the government. *Matt 22:21 Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. KJV*
- b. Because it is a God-ordained institution, we are to **submit** to civil authority as we would to other institutions of God. *1 Peter 2:13-14 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. KJV*
- c. However, Christians are not to give total and final allegiance to the secular state because the Christians' final **allegiance** must be to God. *Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. KJV*
- d. Christians are to be salt and light and to pray for Divine guidance for leaders. We are to be a voice to bring about change where change is in the direction of **godliness**. *Matt 5:13-14 Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. KJV Matt 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. KJV*
- e. Although governments may be guilty of injustice, Christians should not cease working to halt injustice nor ought we to cease to be concerned about human rights because human rights are based on a biblical view of human **dignity**.
- f. Since God's law is supreme, our responsibility as Christians is to call attention to political policies, regulations, laws and actions which are "**unjust**" where such injustice is unambiguously taught in the Word of God
- g. In addition, we are to **protest** when the State (government) intrudes into the spheres of life that are god-given responsibilities of individuals and in cases where the State otherwise violates the Word of God. *Acts 5:40-41 and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. KJV*
- h. No politician or political party deserves the **vote** of a Bible believing Christian when that individual or his political party publicly favors a policy which is patently incompatible with the Word of God.

VII. Application

- a. To what extent have you fulfilled your Christian duty to correct government injustice?