

Government for the Good of the People

Romans 13:1-4

Our text this morning is nearly 2,000 years old. The Apostle Paul wrote these words while living under the tyrannical Roman Emperor Nero. Within our text we can see four principles that help us understand how we relate to this world as a pilgrim and sojourner.

I. God governs the world through leaders He appoints.

“The powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1). When you are born into this world you did not choose your parents and you did not choose your government. The democracies, kingdoms, and dictatorships of this world *“stand ordained”* by God. *“He (God) is the governor among the nations”* (Psalm 22:28). *“(In an) instant I shall speak concerning a nation, to pluck up, and to pull down, and destroy it”* (Jer. 18:7).

II. God gives these leaders specific responsibilities.

Our text gives us a two-fold purpose for every government that exists in this world.

(A). God ordains the powers that be to protect citizens.

“For he is the minister of God to thee for good” (Rom.13:4).

(B). God ordains the powers that be to punish criminals.

“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 the evil-doer” (v.4).

III. God guides revolution when leaders cease to be for *the good of the people*.

There are some Christians who say that verse 2 forbids any kind of popular revolt and the context (12:30), the culture of Paul, and the clear language of (v.2) support this. I don't. God sometimes ordains NEW powers to overthrow corrupt powers. The enormous struggle is when the person God ordains to assist in the overthrow of any government has lived by the Judeo-Christian principle of *“loving one's enemy.”*

Illustrations of such conflict is seen in Deidrich Bonhoeffer, Judas Maccabeus, our Founding Fathers, and in my opinion, President George Bush. We must remember *“Paul is not arguing for any special form of government, but for government and order. Nor does he oppose here revolution for a change of government, but he does oppose all lawlessness and disorder”* A.T. Robertson. I could not agree more.

IV. God gifts His people with the greatest weapon against corrupt power.

The peace movement has a right aim, but the means are all wrong. There will be no peace on earth until the Prince of Peace resides in hearts. The gospel message of Jesus Christ sets captives free. When a man experiences the love of God through the gift of the Lord Jesus, this love of God is manifest in his heart toward his fellow man, yes, even his enemies. What this world needs is a proliferation of the gospel!

“The gospel makes husbands better husbands, wives better wives, parents better parents, nations better nations; in a word, the gospel transforms lives” **Rowland Hill.**