

# The Divinely-Given Role of Government

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: Romans 13:1-4

This is a topic that many shy away from in Biblical discussions. The pulpit is certainly not the place for political speeches. It would be inappropriate to endorse any candidate/party. However, the New Testament does address government; therefore, we ought to address it. God has given a particular role to civil authorities. We need to understand this and how it applies to us.

## Passages Describing the Role God Ordained

- Romans 13:1-4 – authority is from God; He ordained civil authorities to fulfill a particular role; those who oppose civil authorities fulfilling their God-given role are opposing God Himself; a properly functioning government is able to act as God's minister, an instrument in carrying out His will
- 1 Peter 2:13-16 – similar to the previous passage; submit for the Lord's sake; we are not to appear as unprincipled rebels (cf. Proverbs 24:21); yet we act as free men; not free to engage in wicked behavior, but free to serve God
- 1 Timothy 2:1-4 – Paul told Timothy that we are to pray for our rulers; the reason is that “we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity”; this is God's will because He wants all to be saved and any hindrance to this removed

## What God Expects Governments to Do

- Punish evildoers – “it does not bear the sword for nothing” (Romans 13:4); brings wrath upon evildoers; in context, this is specifically about those who would do harm to others (Romans 13:10); this includes those who would kill, steal, abuse, etc.; punish them, not praise them (Proverbs 28:4)
- Protect the innocent – they do this by punishing the wicked (cf. Ecclesiastes 8:12); this is how they “praise...those who do right” (1 Peter 2:14); they afford them freedom and protection; the innocent who are to be protected include the unborn, peaceful citizens, and Christians
- Provide/maintain a free environment – this is the reason we pray for them (1 Timothy 2:1-2); this is so we can assemble, evangelize, work to provide for our own, and care for others without hindrance; civil authorities are not to restrict, punish, or fine what is good (Proverbs 17:26)

## What This Means for Us as Christians

- Our submission to civil authorities is limited – we are to submit to leaders (1 Peter 2:13-14; Romans 13:1); however, Paul qualified this (Romans 13:5-7); not all rulers

fulfill their God-given role; we must obey God first (Acts 5:29); sometimes we may even need to stand up to them (Acts 16:35-40; Ecclesiastes 10:4)

- Our prayer for them is that they fulfill their role – this was the specific reason given by Paul (1 Timothy 2:1-2); we may want to pray for their health, success, etc.; this may seem right from our perspective; but the people are better off when wicked rulers are replaced with righteous ones (Proverbs 28:28; 29:2)
- Our preference for government should not trump God's will for it – we are to pray for God's will (Matthew 6:10); we may have different opinions as to what we think government should do in addition to (but not conflicting with) their God-given role; but our opinions should be secondary; any vote, support, petition, or request we make should not conflict with the role God gave to government

### **Conclusion**

- People have many different opinions about government – we don't need to divide over these
- However, we do need to understand and have a common conviction about what the Bible says
- God has given civil authorities a certain role – let's pray that they fulfill this role so we can continue to serve God without hindrance
- However, if we are hindered/persecuted, let's continue to serve God anyway (Acts 5:29)