

God's Establishment of Government

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[0:00] God has established government.

We find ourselves in a presidential election year. I think we've been in this year for about five years now. I can tell you I have not watched one debate in the party, and when Fox News or CNN starts talking about the candidates, I go to ESPN.

I want to go back to the day of Lincoln when presidents didn't campaign for themselves. Other people did. It was unpresidential to campaign, but we're in an election year, and God has established government.

He has done so for very specific and limited purposes. And he has placed every human being on earth under some form of government.

God's establishment of government, or what he calls the governing authorities, is detailed to us in a number of scriptures, but especially Paul's writing in Romans 13 verses 1 to 5.

[1:21] We're going to be there some this evening. To understand the necessity of Romans 13, though, we are driven back in time to the time of the beginning, to Genesis chapter 3.

And it is there we find our original parents, Adam and Eve. They're living their lives in a perfect environment. They have been placed in the garden.

They have the dominion over the animals and the birds of the air. They had an abundance of food, as every living creature in those days was a vegetarian.

They enjoyed walks with God in the cool of the evening. By the way, I won't develop this theme today, but when you read of God interacting on earth with Adam, that is the second person of the Trinity, that is the Lord Jesus Christ, in a pre-incarnate appearance.

Theologians have a name for that, a theophany or a Christophany. Many times the Lord appeared in the Old Testament. Adam and Eve were given titanic freedoms to exist in God's perfect world.

[2:42] They were given positive commands, such as subdue and populate the earth. They were given one negative command of many trees in the garden that bore delicious fruit.

There was one tree in the middle of the garden, and God gave them this command. The Lord God commanded the man, and men, it was to us. Eve hadn't been created yet.

The Lord God commanded the man, saying, from any tree of the garden you may eat freely, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.

Any knowledge that Eve had of that command she had to get from Adam. Well, we know what happened, don't we? And in Genesis chapter 3, we read these devastating words.

Verse 1 to 8. Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Indeed, has God said, you shall not eat from any tree of the garden.

[3:57] By the way, that's the first question in the Bible. First question mark came from Satan. The woman said to the serpent, From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat from it or touch it or you will die.

Well, first of all, she misquoted. God didn't say that. But we won't touch that tonight. The serpent said to the woman, You surely will not die, for God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate.

And she gave also to her husband, men, with her. Diane pointed that out to me. And he ate.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

[5:15] And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. God was faithful to his promise.

He's always faithful, isn't he, to his promise. Adam and Eve died. They died at that moment. Now we may say, wait, wait, didn't they live hundreds of years and produce male and female children? And the answer is yes. But the moment they ate the forbidden fruit, they died. They died spiritually. They became separated from God. When sin was introduced into the human family, everything changed.

Everything. Everything. The wellhead of humanity was poisoned in that very moment. And all that has flowed from that wellhead is tainted with sin.

[6:23] Here we see our original parents taking for themselves and for all who would descend from them, and that's everyone, a new nature. It is called a sin nature.

It prevails to this day. And that nature would dominate men and women for generations and millennia to come, down to our very day and beyond our day.

I cannot understate to you how everything changed when our parents chose the path of disobedience. And we see this manifested immediately in Adam and Eve.

It says they tried to hide from God. Well, first of all, where do you go to hide from God? I mean, if you're looking for that place, tell me. There is no place.

Jonah tried that. He went down to the bottoms of the ocean where he said, I went to the very roots of the mountain, mountains under the sea, and God was there. By the way, we didn't discover mountains in the ocean until 300 years ago.

[7:27] They should have read the Bible. They should have read the Bible. But everything changed. They were hiding. They invented a religion called fig leaf religion.

If we just cover ourselves, we'll be acceptable to God. We can make ourselves acceptable to God. No one's ever made themselves acceptable to God. And they're going to see when their children are born, they have two sons initially, and one brother murders another.

The sin nature. A few generations later, we see it in the flood, when God destroyed the entire human race except for eight people.

We will then see it later in Babel. God came down and the people in Babel said, we're going to be just like God. We're going to create an edifice here that reaches to heaven.

And so it has gone down through the generations. There is much to learn from Genesis chapter 3, but that's not our focus this evening.

[8:32] I want to discuss the establishment of government found in Romans 13. But the point is that government was made necessary as a result of the actions of our parents in the garden.

We live in a fallen world and without the controls and restrictions of government, we tend to a state of anarchy and rebellion. That is the sin nature manifesting itself.

You can see that all over Iraq, Syria today, where there's really no governing authority. The void is always filled with anarchy and murder and death.

Turn over to Romans chapter 13, and we'll begin with verse 1. Every person, 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.

[9:55] For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. 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, and that's the government, 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 conscious sake.

Paul, writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us that we are to be subject to the governing authorities.

In a broad sense, every person on earth is subject to the governing authorities. But Paul's audience is believers. He's writing to Christians.

[11:01] Every believer is to be subject to the governing authorities. And I say this with a little fear and trepidation. Paul did not say, if you find yourself in a constitutional republic, be subject to the governing authorities.

He did not say, if you live in a democracy, and by the way, let me add, there's never been a democracy on earth. We like to think we are. We like to think Greece was. There's never been one. A democracy is where everybody's got an equal voice. If you think you have that the next time you're a Russian, run by the Supreme Court and go up there and say you've got some things you want to tell them. You'll be in a straitjacket on your way to the mental ward.

We live in a constitutional republic. Paul didn't mention democracy. He didn't mention a monarchy. He didn't mention any form of government, even those horrible forms, communism, fascism. He says, there is no authority except from God. And those which exist are established by God.

[12:10] You may have to deal with God on that subject someday. Paul gives Christians seven reasons here to submit to human government.

The first of these is government is by divine decree. There is no authority except from God and those which exist are established by God.

Human government has been ordained by God for the benefit of society. No government has ever existed in violation of the sovereign will of God, although many times God has removed those governments.

You know, he puts kings in position, he removes them. He can do that because he's our sovereign God. As the psalmist said, all power belongs to God.

He has all power. God is the ruler over all things, but he has for a period of time, yet to be determined, sovereignly allowed Satan to have limited power over this world and the affairs of men.

[13:20] He is the God of this world, little g. John told us the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. That is all part of the fallen world we live in.

And it traces back to Genesis chapter 3 in the Garden of Eden. And over the centuries we've seen very corrupt governments rise and fall.

In the 20th century we saw Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong. Before them there were evil empires of Persia, Assyria, Babylon, Rome.

Believers who find themselves under such men as that or governments are commanded to be in subjection to them. It is part of God's divine plan for fallen mankind.

But believers are not to blindly follow every decree of every government. There is an exception and I'm going to get to that shortly.

[14:27] But the first command God gives is to submit to human government. He has established human government. It has a divine origin.

Second, resistance to government is rebellion against God. Therefore, verse 2, first part of verse 2, Therefore, whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God.

This is simple. Government has been established by God. If one rebels against the government, he is rebelling against God. The very God who established the government.

Rebellion against God is taken very seriously. In the book of Numbers, 250 men rebelled against God's established government.

And the earth opened up. Fire enveloped them. And the ground swallowed them. People didn't like that in Israel. They didn't like it at all. And they grumbled against God.

[15:32] They said, this isn't right. This isn't fair. And the next day, 14,700 perished. And they stopped grumbling. Why wouldn't you?

Rebelling against God can be a heady thing, beloved. Can you imagine if we were under the same standard today? Wow, that would shake up the world, wouldn't it?

Third, those who resist government will be punished. Punished in the second part of verse 2. And they who have oppressed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

The condemnation Paul is speaking here is not the direct judgment of God, as I just explained from the verse in Numbers. It is speaking of the fact that men, and so in women too, must pay a price for having committed crimes against the government.

It is called punishment for crimes. It's my world. Government has even been granted the right and the duty under certain circumstances to inflict capital punishment, the death penalty, on certain offenses.

[16:47] When Peter drew his sword to protect Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord forbade him. He said, Peter, put that sword up.

Had Peter killed a guard or a soldier that night while they were in the midst of arresting Jesus, he would have been rightfully executed by Rome.

In fact, he probably would have been killed on the spot by the Roman soldiers. There is much we can learn from punishment under the Mosaic law.

I don't have time to develop all these, so I urge you to be like the Bereans. Search the scriptures to see if these are true. The punishment given back in the old covenant had to meet the crime.

It was not over punishment. It was not under punishment. Punishment was inflicted by the proper governmental authority. It was not inflicted by the victim or the victim's family.

[17:51] Punishment in scripture was never for personal revenge. Punishment was designed to deter crime. The law and punishment were impartial.

It didn't matter who you were. If you did the crime, you did the time. Punishment was inflicted without delay. Punishment delayed was considered punishment denied.

And with the exception of a capital offense, the offender had the possibility of pardon and rehabilitation.

Once the penalty was paid in full, the offender in the old covenant was allowed back into society as a respectable citizen. He'd paid his debt.

Government also exists to restrain evil. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil.

[18:53] And let me say, when government is putting fear into the lives of the good folks, government's askew. They're askew.

Rulers are not to be a cause for fear for good behavior. God has ordained civil government to restrain evil.

Now remember, we live in a fallen world. We know that, don't we? We battle unredeemed flesh in this fallen world. Paul is speaking here generally.

There are times when governments abuse their authority. And fear grips the law-abiding citizen.

There were many Jews in Germany in the late 30s and 40s that were law-abiding citizens.

And yet under Nazism, they came in, they were seized, many of them executed. There are times when governments abuse that authority and then fear is rampant. Paul experienced that himself.

[19:58] In some respects, we can experience that even in our day. Even in our day. But even wicked regimes have crimes such as murder and theft, and those must be deterred.

Those must be deterred. God speaks to all people concerning their conduct. He speaks through conscience. He speaks through creation.

But he principally speaks through Christ. Through the Lord Jesus Christ. Even unregenerate rulers know instinctively right from wrong.

Now I have to say, we live in a day. Tim and I went to lunch. We talked about this a little bit today. We live in a day when wrong seemeth right.

And the scriptures warn about there's a day coming when wrong seems right. And we live in that day. He has spoken to us through Christ.

[21:01] And even the unregenerate know that. Know right from wrong. Without obedience to such laws, society will self-destruct. Government also serves to promote good.

Last part of verse 3, first part of verse 4. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is right. And you will have praise from the same.

For it is a minister of God to you for good. Back in the days, just leading up to the Civil War, Diane had a great great uncle that was arrested up in Kansas.

I think it was Topeka. And he was put in jail. Well, that night, there was a riot in the jail. Some walls were torn down.

People came from the outside. All the prisoners fled except Diane's great uncle. Or great great uncle. And he was sitting on the bed in his cell with no doors.

[22:09] The next morning when the authorities got there and realized the prison is empty. And they said, why didn't you flee? And he said, I didn't do anything wrong to be put in here. And I wasn't going to leave until someone told me I could.

Well, they took him out, they gave him the key to the city and put him up in a hotel room. I'd love to have that key to the city. He became the hero. God desires that civil government promote the public

good.

People who do good should receive praise as did her uncle from the government. We're to look to our government for protection of life and property.

Every day in this community, my dispatchers receive hundreds of 911 calls. I should say every year. We don't get hundreds every day. But we receive hundreds of 911 calls.

People asking us for help. Asking us to do just that, to protect their life, to protect their property. Sometimes they ask us how the temperature to bake a turkey.

[23 : 13] I mean, we get some crazy stuff too. Usually we'll tell them, oh, 225 degrees. We don't know. Paul understood that government was to do right.

Even the Roman government. He understood that. And in fact, as you recall, Paul was a Roman citizen. Came in very handy during his earthly ministry at times.

And when he was arrested at the insistence of the Jewish leadership and placed into custody by the Romans, they were getting ready to punish him.

And he said, by the way, I'm a Roman citizen. You couldn't beat a Roman citizen unless Caesar signed off on it. And they were in fear.

Because usually they would receive the same punishment for making that mistake. So based on his Roman citizenship, he appealed his case to Caesar.

[24 : 15] It was not wrong for Paul to look to government for protection. God wants us to do that. When Paul confronted the evil of the silversmith in the book of Acts, a riot broke out.

There was a riot. And Paul was getting ready to be torn apart. Paul was rescued by the town clerk. The guy was, I guess, probably like a mayor is today.

And he showed up. He broke up the riot. He ordered everyone to go home. And he saved Paul. God used him as an instrument to save the apostle Paul.

But it is in this passage that God declares that civil officials are to be ministers of God. Even the unsaved. And I look at my job, my position as police chief as a ministry.

Under Romans 13, I've done that. I don't think most police officers in America understand. They're ministers. Most government officials understand that. It is regardless of beliefs or even relationship to God.

[25 : 25] It is a duty. And I wish every public employee and every government in America understood that. We have 17,000 governments in America. Subdivisions.

There's 17,000 of them. Which the founding fathers were wise to do that. When one of them is cancerous, you cut it out. You get rid of it.

Maybe there's some remedial needs there. But it doesn't destroy the whole country. So we broke it down into all these. But public officials need to understand they're doing the work of the Lord.

And it would be good if they realized it, but often they don't. I believe that we do our greatest work by promoting the peace and safety of our people. And I'm always reminding my young officers, and they are young.

I hired one the other day. Born in 1992. Figure that, do that math. And I always remind them, you're a public servant. The public trust.

[26 : 28] And it's difficult in a, I want it now, culture. These young officers grew up in a different, with different standards than my parents instilled in me.

And they're not afraid. They're not afraid. They're not afraid. They're not afraid. They're not afraid. They're not afraid. They're afraid. They're afraid. But if you do what is evil, be afraid.

For it, that's the government, 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.

And let me say, there's a lot of evil in this world. We've had two homicides in the last two weeks here.

A lot of evil in this world. In a just society, those who do evil have a reason to be afraid.

[27 : 31] The sword mentioned here is actually an instrument of death. It represents the right of civil government to inflict punishment up to and including the death penalty, but only for those who deserve the death penalty.

We don't use it for spitting on the sidewalk. We don't beat people for throwing their gum on the sidewalk as they do in Singapore. And I've been there. And didn't shoot any gum while I was there either.

As a police officer, I bear a sword. I will get up in the morning, I'll get dressed, get ready for work, and I will put on a Glock .40 caliber semi-automatic pistol.

That's the sword today. But this particular sword is carried to protect myself and especially others in our community.

And my officers and I have a sworn duty to protect ourselves and others from serious bodily injury or death. I got an interesting discussion with Ed Gordon, the city manager, who's also a Baptist preacher.

[28 : 38] Great man. Dearly love him. I've preached in his church. We got a little, not an argument, a disagreement over pay and not my pay, my officers.

And Ed blurted out and he said, well, do you think your officers are better than the other city employees? I said, of course not. We're not better, but we're different.

And he said, well, how are you different? I said, well, if gunfire erupts in Barstow today, 36,000 people are going to flee from it and 55 are going to go toward it.

And it's amazing we do that. I can't really explain that, but we do that. Even if we're not armed, we do that. It's just something in us.

So I bear a sword. And we have this sworn duty to protect ourselves and others from serious bodily injury or death. In this verse, the Lord affirms the punishment of evildoers, including execution.

[29 : 40] This hearken back to Genesis 9, 6, whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed for the image of God he made man. Ultimately, capital punishment is there because when you snuff out a life illegally, you are touching the glory of God.

Even unsaved lives bear a resemblance to God made in his image. And when that life is destroyed, you are touching the glory of God.

It's interesting that most Western countries have banned capital punishment. Many states in America have banned capital punishment. And it is my opinion that those who do so are outside the will and clear revelation of God.

When a society rejects capital punishment for a fit crime, I believe it comes under blood guiltiness from God. We now find ourselves living in a country that largely bans execution except for the unborn.

We will execute the unborn. My partner in 1978 was killed during a drug raid. I wasn't on duty that night, so I wasn't with him. I wish I'd been there.

[31 : 00] And the individual, of course this is Texas, we fully expected the individual would receive the death penalty. The jury found him guilty and sentenced him to life without parole.

Shocked the judge, shocked all of us. Nothing we could do, so he was sentenced for the murder of my partner who was a Texas Ranger. The first Ranger killed in 60 years.

He was sentenced to life without parole. He was released in 2006. He's living in a beach house in Florida with his parents.

This is our system today. Government should be submitted to... By the way, I was asked about that by the media. They knew we were partners and they called me and they said, What do you think?

And I said, You know, if Bobby comes back to life and says it's okay, I'd be okay with it. But Bobby's still dead. That was my only statement. Government should be submitted to for conscience sake.

[32 : 04] Therefore, it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience sake. We are to submit to the civil authorities for fear of punishment and because of the wrath God permits civil government for the sake of conscience.

As God's children, we are, of course, indwelt with the Holy Spirit. Never leaves us. Never forsakes us. We have his voice telling us that disrespect for government is wrong.

Whether those who engage in such activity are punished or not. It is for the sake of our Christian conscience that we choose the right path. Now, earlier, I promised to you an answer to a Christian.

Are we ever to disobey our government? It's an interesting question. The answer to that question is yes. There are times when we are to disobey the government.

When any government asks or commands us to do what is a clear violation of the word of God, we are not only allowed to disobey, we are commanded to disobey.

[33 : 25] By the way, we call that a Peter and John situation. Peter and John were pulled in by the Sanhedrin. Now, let me explain what the Sanhedrin was.

That was, in Israel, the executive, the legislative, and the judicial branch of government. That was their president. That was their Supreme Court.

And they pulled Peter and John in. And this Supreme Court of Israel said that they should never again preach in the name of Jesus.

Ordered them, you will not preach in that name. And they asked the Supreme Court of that day, are we to obey man or are we to obey God?

Which one? When man, even those in authority over us, asks us to do something that is contrary to God's revealed word, we are to obey God and disobey government.

[34 : 27] It's a little known fact, but at the beginning of our country, there was a group of ministers preaching the gospel. I can't remember what state. I think Massachusetts. They're preaching the gospel.

They were arrested. They were arrested. Because in the early days of our country, individual states had a state religion. Some were Roman Catholic.

Some were other religions. Well, they didn't like these guys, so they were being prosecuted. The author of the United States Constitution heard about it. Now, many people say, well, that's Jefferson.

Jefferson had little to do with writing the Constitution. He was in Europe. James Madison wrote the Constitution. He heard about it. He rode on horseback for hundreds of miles.

Showed up and the trial had started. He walks into the courtroom. A hush fell over the court.

Everyone knew who he was. The judge couldn't, he was paralyzed.

[35 : 27] Madison didn't even ask permission. He just walked right up to the judge. And he said, do I understand these men are being prosecuted for preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in the United States of America?

And the judge hit his little hammer. And he said, case dismissed. And he fled out of the courtroom.

And it died on the spot. It died on the spot.

If we're going to disobey government, we have to meet two conditions. If you can't meet these two conditions, don't do it.

And don't do it lightly. Don't do it lightly. Two conditions. One, the passage we lean on to disobey government must be very clear.

The government must be asking us to do something that is a clear violation of scripture. If the federal government came to this church and ordered Brother Don to perform same-sex marriages, that's not going to happen in this church.

[36 : 36] And I believe in some of your lifetimes, that day's coming. But it's not going to happen here. That would be a clear line in the sand beyond which this or any church would go.

We used to be criticized at VOM for smuggling Bibles. We don't do that much anymore. There are other ways to get Bibles to those countries. But we used to be criticized, and we'd get letters every year because, you know, it's against the law in those countries that are smuggled Bibles.

We relied on Peter and John. He said, take the word to the uttermost parts of the world. And that's what we did. So we've got to meet two conditions. It's got to be clear, clear violation of scripture that you're being asked to do.

You know, make sure it's the right cause. A number of years ago, there were a group of churches in California. Everything bad always starts in California. And then it spreads eastward all across America.

They were suing local governments, and specifically the fire marshal, because he made them put up exit signs in the church.

[37 : 49] Well, they came off as foolish. They said, you don't have a right to be in here. We're a church. The government has no right over us. That's foolish. That's not our fight.

Those signs are there for our protection. And it's not our fight. Fire marshals come here periodically for our safety. So fight the fight that is worth fighting.

First, make sure you have the backing of scripture. Second, if you're going to disobey government, you have to be willing to pay the penalty for your disobedience.

You will owe a price to Caesar. And by that, I mean government. And Caesar will have no other God but himself. And he will exact a penalty.

And you've got to be willing to pay that penalty. You have to be willing to do that. If we disobey, we stand tall, pay the penalty exacted.

[38 : 56] The lady in Kentucky went to jail because she would not issue same-sex marriage certificates. She went to jail. I mean, she stood up to that.

When Paul stood before the Roman governor Festus and made his appeal to Caesar, he said this, If I am a wrongdoer, and if I have committed anything worthy of death, and the Jews, when they turned Paul over to the Romans, said he needs to be executed.

Same thing they said about Jesus, right? He said, if I have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die. He was willing to stand up to the ultimate infliction of punishment.

And ultimately, he was executed. We know that. Paul acknowledged that there were times when capital punishment was justified, and if he had committed a capital offense against the state, he said, I am willing to pay the penalty.

But he knew he hadn't. So he appealed to Caesar. He appealed to Caesar. We must be willing. And then we leave the rest in God's hands.

[40:16] And God's got big hands. And God's got big hands. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care.

Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care.

Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care.

Take care. Take care. Take care. Take care.