“One Nation Under God”

7/01/2018

I Timothy 2:1-8

I’d like to begin today with a multiple choice question; a difficult multiple choice question. Here’s the question. My question is this. Regarding the following line “Secure the blessings of liberty,” was it written or spoken by A. a Philadelphia lawyer? Or B. Is it found in our U.S. Constitution? C. Are they the words of a New York politician? And finally D. Is it part of the preamble to the U.S. Constitution? Take a moment and choose your answers carefully [Repeat the answers].

Now, please be honest. Who here thinks the answer is letter A, please raise your hand? Letter B? Letter C? And letter D?

Let’s go to the answer which is found in the Preamble of our U.S. Constitution, where we read this, “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, 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.”

These words were written by a Philadelphia lawyer named Gouverneur [Pronounced “Goov--nare”] Morris, who at the time lived in New York, and while Attorney Morris was part of the Constitutional Convention of 1787. It is a part of the Preamble. And it is a vital part of our Constitution. So, the correct answer is A., B. C. and D.

I’ve titled today’s sermon “One Nation Under God.” Shall we pray?

Please open your Bible with me to the 13th chapter of the Book of Romans.

Now, there are far too many people who don’t believe that our nation is “One Nation under God.” But I’d like to show you that, throughout history, many, many people believed that we are one nation under God. And I’d like to do so with an emphasis upon the One Who has blessed the government of our United States.

Three days from today, our country will hold its 242nd birthday. And I did some digging a while back and found some of the things that were written by those who played a significant role in the establishment of our country. What would these people think if they could see our United States today?

Here’s the first. It comes from the first President of our Republic, General George Washington. See if Washington wasn’t aware that we are “one nation under God.” *“The hand of Providence, the hand of God, has been so conspicuous in all this, the forming of America, that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more than wicked, that has not gratitude enough to acknow-ledge his obligations, to God and country.”* (Commander-in-Chief to one of his generals, General Thomas Nelson, 1778).

Second, look on with me at one our U.S. Supreme Court Judges. His name is Law professor James Wilson (1742-1798). And, like many of the founding fathers, Wilson signed the Declaration of Independence. Here’s what Justice Wilson said. *“All laws, however, may be arranged in two different classes. 1) Divine. 2) Human...But it should always be remembered that this [human] law, natural or revealed, made for men or for nations, flows from the same Divine source: it is the law of God...Human law must rest its authority ultimately upon the authority of that law which is Divine.”*

Next comes Alexander Hamilton, one of our Founding Fathers, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the man who designed our country’s financial system under George Washington*.* Here’s a word from Hamilton. *“The law...dictated by God Himself is, of course, superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times. No human laws are of any validity if contrary to this…*

*I have carefully examined the evidences of the Christian religion, and if I was sitting as a juror upon its authenticity I would unhesitatingly give my verdict in its favor. I can prove its truth as clearly as any proposition ever submitted to the mind of man.”* – Alexander Hamilton

Here’s an interesting quote regarding laws and law-makers from a number of years ago. *“It will be of little avail to the people that the laws are made by men of their own choice, if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read, or so incoherent that they cannot be understood;*

*if they be repealed or revised before they are promulgated, or undergo such incessant changes that no man who knows what the law is today can guess what it will be tomorrow.”* This is a word from James Madison, fourth President of the United States.

And a word from another one of our Founders; born and raised in Hartford, CT, a man named Noah Webster, Father of American Scholarship and Education. He said this. *“Our citizens should early understand that the genuine source of correct republican principles is the Bible... particularly the New Testament, or the Christian religion…In my view, the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government, ought to be instructed ....*

*No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people....”*

And from more recent history. This is from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, our 34th President serving from 1953 to 1961. *“Without God there could be no American form of govern-ment, nor an American way of life. Recognition of the Supreme Being it the first, the most basic, expression of Americanism. Thus the Founding Fathers saw it, and thus, with God’s help, it will continue to be.”*

And just one more. This one goes all the way back to the founding of the State of CT. It comes from the 1690 Connecticut Literacy Act pertaining to reading and the establishment of public schools. *“This [legislature] observing that... there are many persons unable to read the English tongue and thereby incapable to read* ***the holy Word of God*** *or the good laws of this colony... it is ordered that all parents and masters shall cause their respective children and servants, as they are capable, to be taught to read distinctly the English tongue.”*

Now, with these few quotations from some of those who lived when our county was founded, please follow with me from Romans chapter thirteen at verse one.

Romans 13:1 *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power [authority] but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. (2) Whosoever therefore resisteth the power [authority], resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*

*(3) For rulers [those in authority] 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: (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.*

*(5) Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. (6) For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. (7) Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”*

Now there are lots of ways for us to consider our United States as one nation under God. Today, I’d like you to see this country from the viewpoint of Heaven?

My question is “How does the LORD see our govern-ment?” And here in Romans 13 you can find the answer. Here it is.

First, government in general and our government in particular, is “of God.” This entire first paragraph of Romans 13 tells us that He has set up authorities over the general population. Look at verse one. Romans 13:1 *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers [authorities]. For there is no power [authority] but of God: the powers [authorities] that be are ordained of God.”*

Notwithstanding the goodness or non-goodness of any nation’s governors, the Bible teaches us that “Government is of God.”

Go on with me to verse two. Romans 13:2 “*Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”* To resist our God-ordained authorities is to resist God.

Look on down at verse three. Romans 13:3*“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: (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.”* The authorities are, according to the Holy Spirit in the Apostle Paul, the ministers of God. Paul says it very plainly in verse five. Romans 13:5*“Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. (6) For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.”*

The Scripture says “they are God’s ministers.” Whatever we might think of those in authority over us, when we see things from Heaven’s viewpoint, this is the way things really are. “Government is *of God*.”

That means He designed it. It also means He originated it. And for proof of this, just go back to the Book of Genesis where you find that just after the flood, God gave to man the responsibility of execute judgment, especially in the face of murder. Here’s Genesis 9:6 *“Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”*

And governments throughout history have been fulfilling *His* purposes in this world. Just like God made birds to fly and fish to swim, just like He made families and businesses and the Church, He made authorities and higher powers to govern.

Here’s a word from the Prophet Daniel. Daniel 2:21 *“… He removeth kings, and setteth up kings: …”*

None of us will ever agree with everything our President or our Governor or our town Selectman does. But don’t let that detract from your understanding of Who is was that originated government. This implies at least that the highest ideal for any government is to exalt its Creator. The purpose of governmental authorities wherever they are is to fulfill the role *He’s* given. That means He knows that you and I need, verse one, “the higher powers.”

And, as someone has asked “What kind of government was Paul subject to in his day?” His government was the Roman Empire, often ruled by some of the most depraved and barbaric men to ever walk on the earth.

One, in particular was Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus. Nero was the last of the Caesars. He became emperor at the age of seventeen and four years later, history tells us that he had his own mother murdered. And it was Nero who ordered Christians to fight with wild animals in the Romans arenas. And, at one point, when he wanted his gardens lit at night, Nero had the Christians dipped in flammable material, placed on posts, and lit them afire.

But, notwithstanding the wickedness of some of those who have ruled in our world, the basic fact is that govern-ment is not a man-made idea. Look again at this over-arching word from the Bible, verse one. Romans 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.”*

First, then, Government is ‘of God’ even if Governors, Kings, or Emperors are ungodly. Our nation is one nation under God.

Secondly, each of you is responsible to God when it comes to fulfilling your role as a citizen. Look again at this same verse. Romans 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.”*

Every command of Scripture requires a response to the LORD by way of an action or a change of behavior or attitude. Your place in the eyes of God as it pertains to our nation as one nation under God is to *“be subject.”* That means *they* are in charge and we are their charges. We are subjects under rule. Think about it like this. Mankind is sinful and therefore we need human laws to keep our sinful natures in check. God ordained government to do that for our society.

Now, you might ask, where is the blessing in that, especially if they enact ungodly laws? Just this. Whenever you obey the local police, our state or town laws, or our civil authorities, you are, in a huge way, and from Heaven’s viewpoint, obeying God.

Please turn with me to the Book of I Peter 2, who also teaches the exact same thing as the Apostle Paul. Here’s verse thirteen.

Here’s what Peter says in I Peter 2:13 *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; (14) 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.*

*(15) For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: (16) as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but* ***as the servants of God****.”*

Notice especially these last five words “as the servants of God.” Here’s your role in our nation. As you obey the laws of the land, you do so as God’s servant.

But notice also this phrase in verse sixteen. I Peter 2:16 “*…* ***as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness****, but as the servants of God.”*

This means you are *not* to use your freedom as a citizen to cover up your own evil ways, which we are all prone to. But rather, use your freedom as a servant of *God*.

Can you see how clear the LORD is on the matter of the place of our U.S. Government and our attitude towards it?

First, Government is of God. We are one nation under God.

Second, each one of us is subject to authorities placed over us by the LORD Himself. We believe God is sovereign over our personal lives. So, believe also that He is sovereign over who He places over us as our government.

Now, third, our nation, under God, has both a moral and a spiritual component. Look again at the passage in Romans and see what Paul says in verse three.

Romans 13:3 *“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: (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.”*

Now did you notice that Paul doesn’t tell us everything there is to know about governments and their laws? And He doesn’t tell us how to handle immoral laws such as taking the life of the child inside a mother’s womb. He doesn’t tell us was to do if the government approves of laws allowing gay marriage. Those issues are practical and important. But that’s not what Paul is driving at here. Rather he tells us that government is both moral and spiritual.

He tells us that *“rulers are not a terror to good works.”* He also tells us that *“he is the minister of God for good,” “the revenger of wrath on those who do evil.”*

Folks, you don’t have to agree with every new law or the latest Supreme Court ruling. But, as a Believer in Christ and a man or woman of the Bible, you are to agree with the LORD on all He says, including His words about our nation, our President, our Governor, our Congressman and our Selectmen. Your obligation is to see your government as God sees it and respond like Jesus did when He was falsely arrested and tried; like both Paul did and Peter and the other Apostles did; with the realization that not all laws are good. Folks, there is no perfect government until Jesus rules this world.

But the blessing here is that God designed government with both a moral and a spiritual component. How else could you pray for your President or Governor or State Represent-atives or the members of the Supreme Court? You do pray for them, right?

Here’s I Timothy 2:1 *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; (2) For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. (3) For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; …”*

I think it’s quite possible that one of the reasons some Christians have a low view of government is right here in I Timothy. We really don’t take the time to obey the LORD and to pray for those who in authority over us. When you do, you find that you sincerely want the LORD to move these men and women to obey Him.

Folks, every law has an ethical and a moral quality to it. Why? Because the Ultimate Law-Giver, your Heavenly Father, is the One Who determines the true basis for both morality and law. So, it’s never a question of whether we like or dislike those in authority over us. Nor, is it a question of our liking or disliking certain man-made legislation. God made, designed, created, and set up the government of our nation as a moral and spiritual entity.

By the way, where did this idea of “One nation under God” come from?

Francis Bellamy was the son of a Baptist minister from Mount Morris, NY. Francis became a Baptist minister and Pastored Churches in New York State and Boston, MA. And while in Boston, Pastor Bellamy began to write for a family magazine called “Youth’s Companion.”

The editor asked Pastor Bellamy to arrange patriotic programs for schools for the 400th anniversary of the landing of Christopher Columbus in South America and the naming of our part of the world the America’s. This all took place in August 1892. Bellamy proceeded to convince then President Benjamin Harris to issue a proclamation called “Columbus Day.”

And for the occasion of having the students honor our U.S. flag, Pastor Bellamy was given the responsibility to design a pledge, which he did. He’s what he wrote as the first Pledge to the flag. “*I pledge allegiance to my flag and the Republic for which it stands—one Nation indivisible—with liberty and justice for all.”* [Found on <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-man-who-wrote-the-pledge-of-allegiance>].

Over the years, the pledge has changed. In 1942 our U.S. Congress adopted a national flag code. Then in 1954, under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the phrase “under God.” was added and has stuck.

Folks, yes, we are one nation under God. And every time we pledge allegiance to our flag, we acknowledge that simple reality.

So, First, Government is of God. We are one nation under God.

Second, each one of us is subject to authorities placed over us by the LORD Himself.

And third, our nation, under God, has both a moral and a spiritual component to it.

Now, what will you do with these words from the Apostle Paul?

Here are the three things the Holy Spirit calls you and me to through these words from Romans 13.

One, be subject to those in authority and don’t resist.

Fortunately for us the LORD has given us His ways when it comes to our man-made laws. Civil laws are to be obeyed, not broken. And yes there are many reasons to do so. But God is certainly a God of order. And, generally speaking, this is God’s way of keeping a society in order and not lawless.

Now, when laws are made that are clearly contrary to what is good and right, it is right to appeal.

But, practically speaking, all those in authority over us are God’s designated authorities, just like a parent is the authority over his or her children and just like a boss is the authority over his employees. So, God’s word is plain. Be subject to those in authority and don’t resist them.

And your best illustration of this is Jesus Himself. Here’s what the LORD said when He was being tried by Pontius Pilate, the Governor of Judea. John 19:11 *“Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: …”*

Everyone here has had opportunities to resist the civil authorities. Yet, here’s Jesus, Who created these authorities. And what does He do? He submits to the government as represented by Pontius Pilate.

One, be subject to those in authority and don’t resist.

Two, do good in every circumstance and at every opportunity. Paul’s word is this.

Romans 13:3 “*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: (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.”*

Always, always do the right thing. And why? Because when you do, you have nothing to fear. God said that, I didn’t. He promises that you will have the praise of those in authorities. Peter says this exact thing. I Peter 2:13 *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; (14) 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.”*

The LORD has designed government to praise you when you’ve done right. And when they don’t; as is often the case; it’s still yours to believe Him and live according to these words. And, sometimes the case is that the authorities completely misuse their power. What then?

Again, I go back to Jesus. Here’s John 19:6 *“When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. (7) The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.*

*(8) When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; (9) And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.*

*(10) Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? (11)**Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.”*

Remember that it is always right to do what is right.

One, be subject to those in authority and don’t resist.

Two, do good in every circumstance.

And three, pay tribute and respect those in authority.

Romans 13:6*“For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. (7) Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”*

These are just three of the many things God will hold you to when it comes your government. You need to pray. You need to vote. You need to pay your share of taxes. And you need to show respect.

It was President Ronald Reagan that said this. “If we ever forget that we are 'One nation, under God', then we will be one nation gone under.”

And Benjamin Franklin was the one who recommended everyday prayer in our government.

“In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine Protection. Our prayers were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor.

And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth; That God governs in the affairs of men.

If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise, without His aide? We have been assured in the Sacred writings, that unless the Lord build a house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this.

And I also believe, that without His concurring aide, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel.

I therefore beg leave to move, that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessings on our deliberation, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business.”

What will you do this July 4th 2018 as it pertains to the government God has given to us? Will you submit to those in authority over you?

I Peter 2:13 *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; (14) 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.*

*(15) For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: (16) as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but* ***as the servants of God****.”*

Now, if you are here today and realize finally that you are in need of a Savior, here is what you must do.

Today is the Day of Salvation. *Your* need is to recognize that the one thing that separates you from God is your sin. Repent of your sins and to Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ.

* To Repent = to change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To Believe = to simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins.

Jesus Christ paid the penalty for every sin you ever committed. He became your Substitute on the day He died on Calvary two thousand years ago. For you, here’s the greatest news in all the world is this: The Father gave His Son to pay the penalty for all your sins. Jesus Christ died on the Cross as your Substitute and wants to be your Savior today. Won’t you cry out to Him for His free gift of salvation?

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

Here’s the sinner’s prayer.

“Father, I realize I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died in my place on the cross. I repent of my sins. I want to be completely forgiven today. I am trusting you right now to save me. Thank you. Amen”

Hymn # 799 “America The Beautiful”