“God and Government” 7/04/2015

The Preamble of our U.S. Constitution says, “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.”

The Preamble was written by a Philadelphia lawyer Gouverneur [pronounced Gover-neer] Morris from New York when he took part in the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Sometimes when a book or an article or even an essay is written, the writer will think through what he has written and write something about what he’s just completed. That’s what happened when Governor [Gover-neer] Morris did soon after the U.S. Constitution had been completed. His words became what we call today “the Preamble.” It is now a vital part of it. [Gouverneur Morris was a Rational Theist who once wrote *“My trust is not in a President, Senate, and House of Representatives, but in Him who governs empires, the world, the universe.” [Found on ww.theonebestway.wordpress.com posted August 22, 2010]*]

I’ve titled today’s sermon “God and Government” in part from this specific reason given in the Preamble of our country’s Constitution which is “and secure the *Blessings* of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”

Shall we pray?

Now, I’m quite sure that there are plenty of people who don’t or won’t see “God” in our government. But I’d like to say something about that today. And I’d like to do so with an emphasis upon the LORD as the One Who has indeed blessed the government of our United States.

Yesterday our country held its 239th birthday. Here are just a few words from some people I thought at the outset of my sermon might be worthy of our hearing from.

One man said it this way. “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 acknowledge his obligations, to God and country.”

Those strong words were spoken by none other than United States Commander-in-Chief General George Washington in 1778.

He also said this “It is impossible to rightly govern a nation without God and the Bible.”

George Washington wrote a book he titled “Daily Sacrifice.” It’s a book of prayers he used personally. Here’s one of them titled “Sunday Evening Sacrifice.” “Most glorious God, in Jesus Christ, my merciful and loving Father; I acknowledge and confess my guilt in the weak and imperfect performance of the duties …

But, O God, Who are rich in mercy and plenteous in redemption, mark not, I beseech thee, what I have done amiss; remember that I am but dust, and remit my transgressions, negligences and ignorances,

and cover them all with the absolute obedience of thy Dear son, that those sacrifices which I have offered may be accepted by Thee, in and for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered upon the Cross for me …” [Found on www.johnbaptisthenry.blogspot.com].

As you can easily see, God and Government were united in the heart and mind of our first U.S. President? First, then, the presidency of our United States reminds us that God and Government are intertwined.

Second, where did you think our laws came from? Here’s a word from one of the signers of our United States Constitution, Mr. James Wilson (1742-1798). Wilson was also a U.S. Supreme Court Judge. “A good constitution is the greatest blessing which a society can enjoy. It is the best form of government which has ever been offered to the world.” [Found on [www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com) by Jada Washington on 9/8/2012]. “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.”

First, the presidency of our United States reminds us that God and Government are intertwined.

Second, our U. S. Laws remind us that God and Government are intertwined.

And here’s a word from Mr. Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton also signed the U.S. Constitution. He wrote “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.” So says Mr. Alexander Hamilton, first Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, attorney, and co-author of the Federalist Papers.

First, the presidency of our United States reminds us that God and Government are intertwined.

Second, our U. S. Laws remind us that God and Government are intertwined.

Third, the Bible reminds us that God and Government are intertwined.

Next, here are the words of a man born and raised in Hartford, CT, 1778 graduate of Yale College and author of the first “American Dictionary of the English Language,” a man named Noah Webster. By the way, it took Webster 22 years to complete this dictionary [Found on [www.noahwebsterhouse.org](http://www.noahwebsterhouse.org)].

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....”

So, with the words of our Founders in mind, please open your Bible with me today to Romans chapter thirteen.

Now, I realize many in our present-day U.S. Government would not agree with Washington, Wilson, Hamilton, or Webster. But the words of these men show us what our Founders thought when our country was first formed.

Now, please open your Bible with me to the Book of Romans at chapter thirteen. Romans 13:1 [Read 13:1-7].

Today I want to take a few minutes to look at govern-ment from the viewpoint of the LORD. And I want say as I begin that I am neither a lawyer nor am I a scholar. I simply want to send you a clear message here that if the Bible is The Source of Truth; and it is; then wouldn’t you expect the LORD to tell us exactly what God thinks of governments and the authority they hold? And, of course, I want to say something about our US Government.

So the question I’d like to respond to in this sermon is “How does the LORD see our government?” And here in Romans 13 you can find the answer.

First, Government in general and our U.S. government in particular, is “of God.” This entire first paragraph of Romans 13 tells us that, just like the law of gravity is “of God,” so “government is of God.” He has set up authorities over us both for our benefit and as, you will see, to keep evil I check. Look with me at 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****.”* So, what does Scripture plainly teach? That govern-ment (government in general) is “of God.” This in no way implies that every governmental leader is a Believer or does what is right. Nor does it mean that every law set down by a government is a good law.

Can you see what the Bible does for us? It re-orients us back onto what is right in God’s sight.

And here’s the re-orientation. All governments exist; they come into being; they are here by the permission of God Himself.

Do you see this line “ordained of God”? It means that God has, in essence, said “Let there be government. And there was government.” The only reason for the existence of a government anywhere on planet earth is because God has so ordained it to be here.

The “higher powers,” the “powers that be” are in existence because God ordains it.

Now consider the fact that the Apostle Paul was writing in a day and time when the Roman government ruled the world. We call it today the Roman Empire. It spread over one million square miles. Nearly the entire continent of Europe was inside the Empire as well as England, Wales, Spain, France, Greed, the Middle East and sections of North Africa.

And what would it have been like living in the Roman Empire? Slavery; a dictator; oppressive and miserable taxes; state religion; and persecution. And the Roman Emperor Claudius also specifically made an edict expelling all the Jews from the city Rome.

Now, was the Roman Empire ordained of God? Consider with me that Paul writing by the Holy Spirit wrote what we now call Romans 13. And think about the fact that Jesus, with one word, could have removed the Roman government from its place. But, as everyone knows, it was the Roman government that arrested him, declared Jesus a criminal, and crucified Him.

Jesus spoke specifically about the government when He said Matthew 22:20 *“Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.”*

So, according to Jesus, the government has its place. But, never can the government usurp the position God holds in the hearts of men and women. Yet, He, in essence, ordained the very government that put Him to death.

First, government is “of God.”

Second, to resist the government is to resist God.

Now, look at verse two of Romans 13.

Romans 13:2 *“Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”*

Paul’s subject here is you and me. So, are you resisting those in authority over you? You and I, according to the Bible, are resisting the Creator Himself when we reject and resist those in authority over us.

The Bible, as you know, is very practical. So, what you will automatically ask is this. “Should you obey the law?” And the answer is yes, unless it commands you to disobey God. But, as you will see in the Bible, if you do reject and disobey that law, you can expect, as Jesus, the Apostles and many in the Early Church did, in many cases, to be punished by that same authority.

Then, the second practical question here is this. Should we change the laws? And the simple answer is “yes, we should appeal and we should seek by any lawful means to change the laws so they line up with what God says in His word.

Folks, Christians have always lived in nations across the globe in times when the government was anything buy a godly authority.

Now, what does the LORD specifically say about those in authority over us? Roman 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.”*

In Romans 13 you’ve got a word that says that the government is “of God.” You find “the ordinance of God.” And here you have the “minister of God.”

So, the third practical question that you might raise is this. What about the Supreme Court ruling of Friday, June 26th which gives permission to lesbians and gays to marry each other?

And again the same answer. We are to obey the law of the land. If we choose to disobey it, we might be fined or punished according to the law.

At the same time, what we at our Church have done is this. On August 17, 2014 we added a statement on marriage and sexuality to our EBC constitution. We do want to abide in the law of the land. But we also must respond to it.

And notice very carefully what God says in verse four. Roman 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****.”*

The clear teaching on homosexuality and lesbianism in Scripture is that it is an abomination in God’s sight. So, to reject same-sex marriage is not doing evil. It is to abide in the teachings of the LORD Himself. Yet, as we know, since the 1960’s numerous laws have been introduced in our country that are both unbiblical and anti-biblical.

And how is the child of God to respond? We must abide in God’s word and follow the laws of the land until they cause us to disobey the laws of God. Then, there is to be a rejection of those laws.

And do you know what happened to the Apostles who applied this principle in the Roman Empire?

Acts 5:29 *“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. (30) The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. (31) Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*

*(32) And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. (33) When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.”*

What we might never be able to fully comprehend is this. We should always obey the law because we know that government is ordained of God. And were we to be punished or persecuted or even slain because we did what was right when faced with clearly unbiblical laws; we leave to God to judge because in the final analysis, the Highest Judge in the universe will have His say.

So, the Romans 13:4 question is this. Are those in authority in ungodly governments the “ministers of God”?

Here’s what Paul says. Roman 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.”*

Can you see that the government and those who are ordained of God to rule people have a huge responsibility to those they serve? They are not to execute wrath upon those who do good; but to those who do evil.

But Paul’s point is this. “He is the minister of God to thee for good.” And he uses the very same phrase in verse six. Romans 13:6 *“For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for* ***they are God's ministers****, attending continually upon this very thing.”*

Now, how can an evil king be God’s minister? In this sense; in the sense that his authority is derived from God. Anyone who serves in public office or public service is a minister of God; even if it’s not in a truly “ministering” sense. God’s word says that the authorities are the ministers of God.

Whenever we may live in the world and whatever we might think of those in authority over us, a Biblical worldview and a heavenly viewpoint is one in which we see things as they really are.

And here is that Biblical worldview and the way God sees it – “Government is *of God*.”

Now, doesn’t that mean He designed it? Doesn’t it mean He originated it? And doesn’t it mean that in some sense He fulfills *His* purposes in this world through it? Just like God made birds to fly and fish to swim, He made authorities and higher powers to govern.

You may not agree with everything our US Supreme Court or President or our Governor or our Old Saybrook Selectman does. But don’t let that detract from your understanding that God originated government and it accomplishes His purposes.

But this also implies at the least the highest ideal for any government is to exalt its Creator. Their purpose as governmental authorities is to fulfill the role *He* has ascribed to it. That also means He knows we, as sinners, desperately need, verse one, “the higher powers.” And also, since they are God’s ministers, are we not accountable to God for obeying the rules of the state?

But, you ask, isn’t there a place for Biblical civil disobedience? And the answer is “Yes.” No Christian is expected by God to obey man’s laws that causes him or her to live in disobedience to Him. And every time we come up against such a law, we have the opportunity to do two things: one, appeal to those in authority; and two to obey God above man.

How can I say that?

Do you remember the prophet Daniel? He prayed three times a day to his God. Yet, the law said he was to only pray to the Emperor King Nebuchadnezzar. In essence, he disobeyed as he prayed to his Father in Heaven.

So, when it was discovered that he prayed, he was cast into the den of lions. And you know that outcome of that decision.

Daniel 6:15 *“Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.*

*(16) Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.”*

And Daniel who was civilly disobedient obeyed God and suffered the consequences inside a pagan government. And God chose to deliver miraculously deliver him.

And what about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Weren’t they civilly disobedient when the law said they were to bow down to the king when the national theme song was played? And what became of them?

Daniel 3:16 *“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. (17) If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. (18) But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”*

You, as one of God’s children live with dual citizenship. You are a citizen of earth while you are a citizen of Heaven. Remember that you serve a King in a kingdom that is not of this world.

Philippians 3:20 *“For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:…”*

And look closely, citizen of Heaven, at 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 the way it is. As you obey the laws of the land, you do so as a servant of God. See the world as God sees it. But make sure you see yourself as He sees you.

First, Government is of God.

Second, they are ministers of God to whom each one of us is accountable.

Third, we are responsible to obey God first in every area of our lives.

Fourth, and finally, you are called to pray for those in authority over us.

I Timothy 3:1 *“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;*

*(4) Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (5) For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”*

As you can see the Bible is filled with the truth about government and, as well, your responsibility as a citizen of the United States of America.

So, what will you do? Will you complain about out government or will you act Biblically? Will you see the government from Heaven’s viewpoint? Will you pray for your governmental leaders?

Folks, God’s way is the right way. He’s shown you the way. Will you walk in it? As a Christian, you are accountable to the LORD for the way you live; for the attitudes you hold; and for the service you do. Let the Bible persuade you in your thinking today.

Now, lastly, you might be here today and not be aware that there is a larger need when it comes to your relationship to God. You need a personal one-on-one relationship with Him. And fortunately for you, He has provided a way for you to be “right” with Him. That way is the way of the Cross.

Today is the Day of Salvation. *Your* biggest 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.

Your highest crimes are against Him; your lies; your bitternesses; your ungodly deeds; your selfishness. It was for these that Jesus died on the Cross. He became your Substitute and He wants to be your Savior today. Won’t you cry out to Him in repentance and receive His free gift of salvation? What could possibly hold you back from having a saving relationship with your Creator?

*“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)

*“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”*

Have you decided to follow Jesus? Then, please don’t forget these words from His lips *“But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.”* (Luke 11:28)

Now as we come to the LORD’s table, please find Hymn # 602 with me. “I Have Decided To Follow Jesus.”