

Theme: Civil Government is a divine institution under God's control, established to bring order in this world, for the sake of the church and the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ.

Background/Introduction: Our government is something for which we can give thanks to God as we celebrate "Thanksgiving," even though this past week has been difficult for many in our country. But neither God's rule over government, nor our role under it has changed.

- I. Civil Government Is a Divine Institution
 - A. An instrument of justice
 1. We do not take personal vengeance
 2. It doesn't always wait for "judgment day"
 - B. Governments are instituted by God
 1. Governments do not exist apart from God's appointment
 2. Rulers/authorities are servants/ministers of God
 - a. Same word used for deacons/ministers of the Word
 - b. They are in God's service
 - C. They have no authority/power apart from God
 1. Proverbs 21:1; Psalm 22:28; 33:16; Jeremiah 27:5-8; Daniel 4:34-36
 2. John 19:10
 - D. Power with clear limits
 1. We must obey God over all.
 2. Acts 5:29; Exodus 1:17; Daniel 3 & 6
- II. Civil Government Exists for the Glory of God
 - A. Accomplishing His purposes
 1. His divine purposes
 - a. Are often hidden from us (Psalm 115:3)
 - b. Are sometimes revealed (Isaiah 10)
 2. The human agents of His plans
 - a. Government is a "human" institution (1 Peter 2:13-17)
 - 1) Formed in various ways
 - 2) No perfect government given
 - b. Under God's divine institution and order (Acts 2:23; 4:26-28; Genesis 50:20)
 - B. For the Church
 1. For the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ
 - a. God is at work in the nations and rulers of the earth to advance the Kingdom of Christ.
 - b. May not be their plan – but it is His! (Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Timothy 2:1-2)
 2. The silence of the Church
 - a. Separating civil and church governments (Westminster Confession of Faith 31-4)
 - b. God alone is Lord of the conscience
 3. The voice of the Church - Instruction from the Word of God to inform the conscience
- III. All Are Subject to the Governing Authorities
 - A. All Are subject to the Creator
 1. Instrument/institution of creation – not redemption
 2. Established for our good
 - B. Resist the government and resist God - even taxes!
 - C. Resist God and face judgment

IV. Living under the Civil Authorities

- A. Your government is instituted by God, therefore strive to show due honor, submission, obedience and respect to those in authority.
- B. Seek to live as one commended for your good works (even if your government doesn't actually "commend" you) for the sake of conscience and to avoid wrath.
- C. Those in authority are "servants of God." You need have no fear as a child of God in "ministering" in the civil government.
- D. Bad government is better than the alternative.
- E. Give thanks for a government that still upholds a rule of law – and pray for both the government of the nation and the flourishing of the church.
- F. No matter how you voted, those in authority will serve God's purposes. Pray that we have the eyes and grace to discern those purposes, and order our lives accordingly in His service.