

Bible Study

November 7, 2024

In my many years of teaching Bible studies (since the late 1970s), I don't recall ever teaching or discussing political campaign issues or how we, as believers, should vote. However,

- I do recall three occasions when I briefly mentioned my thoughts and concerns about specific political events: the first study after 9/11 (2001), the pending invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the first study after the 2016 election.
- I have, on a few occasions, taught some aspects of what the Bible says about governing authority and how God expects us to respond to it. Each time I was met with silence—it was obvious to me that my fellow brethren did not agree with my teaching and their judgment was palpable.

Just 3 or 4 years ago I wrote my study titled **Governing Authority**, incorporating and expanding upon the notes that I had developed starting in the 1970s. I have made some minor revisions to it since then, and the latest version is on the website.

- I have not taught from this study because of the negative responses I received about the subject in the past.
- However, I believe that what I have said in it correctly represents Scripture, and wish that others would read it.
- Also, I have seriously considered sending it to members of Congress who publicly claim to be Christians (I don't know if they are or not), but haven't done so (at least not yet).

So, this will be my fourth time referring to a specific political event, and another occasion of briefly discussing the basis for my study on governing authority.

America has voted in Donald Trump to be president again, this time not only through the Electoral College vote but also through the popular vote. This concerns me greatly, as both an American citizen but mostly as a believer. I think that difficult times are ahead if he does what he has promised to do.

During election night, starting at about 2:00 a.m., I began writing down my thoughts. They are truly about what I was thinking at the time and I finished about 5 hours later. I posted it on the Mini-Studies page that morning, and you are welcome to read it if you are interested.

What does the Bible say about governing authority?

Every person [*believer*—Romans 1:7] **is to be in subjection to the governing authorities** [higher powers]. **For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance** [*commandment*] **of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do 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** [*e.g., break the law*], **be afraid; for it 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 conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all**

what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. (Romans 13:1-7; see also Luke 20:19-26)

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution [ordinance of man], **whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves** [servants] **of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood** [*fellow believers*], **fear God, honor the king.** (I Peter 2:13-17)

- What do these passages say? According to Romans 13:1-7:
 - We are to be in subjection to our governing authorities or higher powers.
 - There is no authority except from God, and those that exist are established by God (see also Colossians 1:16-17; Psalm 103:19).
 - Those who resist authority have opposed the authority of God and will receive condemnation upon themselves (see also Exodus 22:28).
 - Those in authority are ministers or instruments of God. They are avengers who bring wrath upon (judge) those who practice evil.
 - We are to be in subjection because of wrath and for conscience' sake. That is, we should do what is good or right; doing what is wrong (e.g., breaking laws of our government) results in punishment.
 - We are to render to all that is due them: taxes (see also Luke 20:19-26), custom, fear (respect), and honor.

According to I Peter 2:13-17:

- We are to submit ourselves, for the Lord's sake, to every human institution whether it be a king or a governor sent by the king (in our case, the hierarchy of authority is our president, governor, and mayor or equivalent).
- Submitting ourselves to those in authority is according to the will of God and is the right thing to do.
- We are to *act* as free people (regardless if we are politically free or not) in the service of God; we are not to use our freedom in Christ, however, as a covering or excuse for doing what is wrong (see also Galatians 5:1, 13).
- We are to honor all people (including those in positions of authority), love our fellow brethren, and fear God (i.e., be in submission to Him because He is the sovereign Almighty God and is greater than all human authority).
- What was the political environment when Paul and Peter wrote these passages by inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Israel (Judea) was a conquered colony of the Roman Empire and was ruled by the Caesar or Emperor, his appointed Roman governor over Judea, and the Jewish King of Judea who was subservient to both the governor and Caesar.
- I truly believe that all political leaders of all time, whether President, Governor, Mayor, Prime Minister, Chairman, Chancellor, Generalissimo, King or Queen, Czar, Emperor, Caesar, Pharaoh, etc. (and, yes, even Führer), are in authority by the will of God—He uses them for His purpose (Romans 9:14-21; Psalm 103:19; Proverbs 21:1; Isaiah 46:9-10; Daniel 4:34-35).

Even Hitler?

What shall we say then? There is no injustice [unrighteousness] with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use [honour] and another for common use [dishonour]? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy [believers], which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among the Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. (Romans 9:14-24)

Yes, even Hitler. But why would God put a man like him into power, considering all the evil that he did? I don't know the mind of God, but I do know the following:

What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy [believers], which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among the Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. (Romans 9:22-24)

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

Furthermore (from my study **Salvation and the Sovereignty of God**):

But He [God] is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does. (Job 23:13)

Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation. (Psalm 33:8-11)

The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty [kingdom] rules over all. (Psalm 103:19)

But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases. (Psalm 115:3)

Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps. (Psalm 135:6)

The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil. (Proverbs 16:4)

The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. (Proverbs 16:9)

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord. (Proverbs 16:33)

Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord will stand. (Proverbs 19:21)

The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes. (Proverbs 21:1)

There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the Lord. (Proverbs 21:30)

For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back? (Isaiah 14:27)

"Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'." (Isaiah 46:9-10)

So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)

All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" (Daniel 4:35)

Considering all these things, what is my response to our upcoming new leadership?

- Donald Trump, since during the 2016 campaign, has revealed through his own words and actions the kind of man that he is—exceedingly arrogant, immoral, hateful, revengeful, and blasphemous (he compares himself to God and Jesus). His public life is the complete opposite of every aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). *However*, I truly believe that he has been (and will be again) President by the will of God, just like all presidents have been—and just like *all* political leaders since the beginning of civilization as we know it. It is my responsibility as a believer to submit to our president, governor, and mayor (regardless of their character or political affiliation) unless they force me to do something that is contrary to God's written will. If Donald Trump's promises and Project 2025 are implemented as planned, I believe that we will be forced to obey the president rather than God (as occurs in all authoritarian nations); as for me, I will serve God (Joshua 24:14-15).
- I will endeavor to not live in fear of anyone or anything.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God' elect [*believers—God's children*]? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us

from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, “For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:31-39)

- I have great peace knowing that nothing can separate me from the love of God and also when I truly take God at His word and trust Him that He is working everything out for my good (Romans 8:26-28; Philippians 1:6; 2:12-13).

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:6-9; see also Colossians 3:1-4)

- I will continue to try to love my neighbors as myself as commanded by God. My neighbors include my beloved wife, my wonderful daughters and their families, my Bible study friends and other friends, those in my neighborhood, as well as everyone I encounter in day-to-day life, regardless of their race, creed, religion, sex or sexual orientation, citizenship, political affiliation, etc.
- I will consider it a blessing to be persecuted for standing and living for God and my Lord Jesus Christ—for walking worthy of my salvation (Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 1:9-12). It is my desire to bless those who persecute me and never to seek vengeance against them.

Blessed are you when people insult [revile] you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me [Christ]. (Matthew 5:11)

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (II Timothy 3:12)

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:14-21).

Closing Thoughts

- I have not been affiliated with any party since 1976 (I was 20 years old), when I was registered and voted as a Republican for Republican candidates.

- With two exceptions (1976 and 2020), I have not voted for president or governor (we don't vote for our mayor in Grand Junction). I explain my reasons in the study **Governing Authority**, which are driven by the passages in this study and many others throughout Scripture.