

Personal Thoughts

November 6, 2024

It is 1:55 a.m., Mountain Time, as I begin putting into words what my mind is trying to process about the current election results. It appears certain that Donald Trump has been elected to be our next president and that both the House and Senate may be controlled by his party. I am writing this for anyone who is interested in my thoughts. I don't know how this will develop or how long it will take, but it is from my heart.

Those who know me know that I base my thoughts and my understanding on how I am supposed to live each day on what God has revealed to us through His word—the Bible. Those who know me best also know that I often fall short of my desire to think and live as I ought to do. I recognize many of my shortcomings, but deep down my faith in what God says remains strong and unwavering. So, as usual, my written thoughts are derived from my spiritual thoughts—what I truly believe in my heart. I suspect that I will write out several Bible references and refer to many more so that you might gain a greater understanding of my thought process and to see what the Bible says about these things.

Because of the election results, I believe that there are dark days ahead not only for the United States and its American citizens (and undocumented immigrants), but also for members of the body of Christ—those individuals who truly believe the gospel of salvation that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised up from the dead (I Corinthians 15:1-4; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2:8-9; Romans 5:6-11). But didn't Christians help put Mr. Trump into office again, as they did his first term? Yes. I'm afraid many true believers did (including people I personally know and have fellowshiped with), as well as many more who falsely claim to be Christians.

I believe there are dark days ahead because if Mr. Trump does even half of the things he has promised to do as President, then hard times will fall on all of us. He ran a campaign of power and hate, and he promised retribution against anyone who has opposed him, or will oppose or not pledge their loyalty to him. This type of mindset does not result in good things.

However, I choose not to live in fear and will continue to trust in the Almighty God and my Lord Jesus Christ, and will always try my best to love my neighbors as myself. 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 citizenship, race, creed, religion, sex or sexual orientation, or political affiliation.

Although I am disappointed in the election results, I know this for certain: God is in control. In fact, He planned this to occur for His purpose, whether it be for good or for bad. Furthermore, unless our new government tells me to do something sinful—against the will of God—then I will obey my leaders. How can I possibly believe these things? I believe them because God has said so in His written word. Please consider the following passages from the Bible.¹

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.

¹ All references are quoted from my copy of the *New American Standard Bible (NASB Side-Column Reference Edition)*, Copyright © 1996 by The Lockman Foundation) unless otherwise noted. Nonbolded words in brackets are either equivalent words from the *King James Version (KJV)* or, if in italics, were added by me for clarification.

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 Matthew 22:15-22)

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)

A lot of things are covered in these passages, and they are corroborated through many examples throughout the Bible. I explain them as best as I know how in my study **Governing Authority** that is on the Bible Studies page of my website at gospelofgracenotes.org. That study also includes examples of when, and why, God expects us to disobey our leaders.

Consider the political environment under which the apostles Paul and Peter wrote these passages according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (i.e., they wrote the word of God and not their own thoughts or reasonings—II Timothy 3:16-17; I Thessalonians 2:13; II Peter 1:20-21). Israel (more specifically, Judea) was a conquered colony of the Roman Empire. As with most of its colonies, Rome allowed the people of Israel to retain their form of leadership, but the leadership was subservient to the authority in Rome. Therefore, Israel still had a Jewish king, though approved or appointed by the Roman Senate. However, Israel was governed by a governor of Rome (Pontius Pilate during the time of Jesus' crucifixion and later Felix and Festus—Matthew 27:11-14; Acts 23:23-24; 24:27) who answered directly to the Roman emperor or Caesar. Herod (known historically as Herod the Great and later as Herod I) was King of Judea during the time of Jesus' birth (Matthew 2:1), and Paul made his defense before King Agrippa (Acts 25:23 – 26:32; also known historically as Herod Agrippa II). These were the governing authorities—the Caesar of the Roman Empire, the Roman governor over the region that included Judea, and the Jewish King—that both Paul and Peter referred to and instructed the brethren to be in subjection to.

How does this apply to us today? All those in authority, 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). American Christians may think we have the responsibility and power to put *our man* or *God's man* (or maybe a woman someday) in office, but what makes us more politically influential in accomplishing the will of God than believers who live in nondemocratic countries, whose leaders are also in power by the will of God? We must be careful who

we support and why, because God may have planned to place our choice in authority for the purpose of dishonorable use or as a vessel of wrath (Romans 9:21-22; Proverbs 16:4).

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)

This passage is not a favorite among many Christians and is often misunderstood or explained away to mean something else. But please read it for what it says. God is our sovereign Almighty God, and He appoints and uses governing authorities, including our own, to fulfill His purpose. We don't have to understand why some leaders are better than others, or that some are very evil in their actions against their own people or neighboring countries, because God's ways are beyond our comprehension and His plans encompass eternity.

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)

I mentioned earlier that our new government may work against true believers. Unfortunately, I'm afraid that many of our vocal Christian leaders today are much like the religious scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day, who ultimately swayed the people of Israel to demand the crucifixion of their own promised Messiah (Matthew 27:19-23; Acts 2:22-24). Jesus had nothing good to say about them, who had changed the Law of Moses (which was God's law to the people of Israel) to suit their own purposes and were extremely hypocritical in their actions (e.g., read Matthew Chapter 23). They didn't stop with the crucifixion of Jesus because not long afterward they stoned the disciple Stephen to death for speaking the truth of God and began a terrible persecution to exterminate the followers of Jesus (Acts 6:8 – 8:3; 26:1-11; Galatians 1:13-14).

The Pharisees of today have developed and endorsed the doctrine of *Christian Nationalism*, which is loosely based on the promises of the Law of Moses² and is incorporated into the agenda of the new administration through Project 2025. This doctrine is a gross misuse of Scripture and it is entirely against

² I encourage you to read my study **The Law of Moses** that is on my website. I specifically address Christian Nationalism in my study **Governing Authority**.

the will of God. These people, as well as many Christians who believe their teaching, do not understand that through the redemptive work of Christ at the cross that the Law of Moses was taken out of our way—it was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:13-14; Galatians 3:10-14). That is, we are no longer condemned by the Law if we believe that Christ died for our sins, nor can we claim the promises of the Law, which were specifically addressed to the nation of Israel.

Because of this false teaching, it is entirely possible that the leaders and followers of Christian Nationalism will oppose everyone, including Christians, who do not conform to the doctrine. This could easily lead to physical persecution. I say this because of the following passages (and others) written by the Apostle Paul.

For the time will come when they [*believers—children of God*] will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

(II Timothy 4:3-4)

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I [*Paul*] come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me. (Philippians 1:27-30)

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

Also contrary to popular Christian teaching today, if we truly suffer for doing the right thing in accordance with God's word, then we are to consider it a blessing (I Peter 3:14-17). Even more astounding, we are to bless those who persecute us and leave judgment to God. Instead, we are often taught to fight for our perceived Christian rights and seek justice through our court system. This approach is also part of the Christian Nationalism doctrine and is wrong.

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)

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).

Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren. (I Corinthians 6:7-8)

I can't predict the future, but I'm inclined to believe that if our new president and his enablers carry out his campaign promises and the agenda of Project 2025, we may see sanctioned persecution against many people, including true believers in Christ. As I said before, however, I will not live in fear. I'm reminded that Paul's letter to the Philippian believers, written while he was in a Roman prison not knowing if he was going to be released or be put to death (he was later executed for his faithful service to God and our Lord Jesus Christ—II Timothy 4:6-8), is considered to be a book of joy (e.g., Philippians 1:3-11). He shared his joy in his ministry and suffering for Christ and in his fellowship with the Philippian believers. I encourage you to read his short letter to them. It is much healthier to live in joy than to live in fear. I'm also reminded of the following passage from Paul's letter to the believers in Rome.

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 know that nothing can separate me from the love of God and I have great peace in that knowledge 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)

The words of my beloved wife, Linda, also come to mind: We need to remember that God is in control and we should focus our love and attention on our loved ones and our friends. We are particularly blessed by our three daughters, their husbands, and our four precious grandchildren.

May you know God's grace and peace!

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