



Government: A Gift from God

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A lot of Christians in our country have made a serious mistake. They've stayed out of politics or attempted to disconnect their political views from their Christian faith, believing they should keep religion and government separate.

Take for example my state of California. Back in 1968, when Ronald Reagan was governor, we had the fifth largest GDP in the world! It was the state of the future. Everybody wanted to go to our secondary school systems, places like Stanford, Berkeley, USC, UCLA. The space industry was in California.

We had marvels of engineering like the California Aqueduct, which brought water from the Sierras into the most fertile farmland in the world in the San Joaquin Valley. And we produced more cotton in the San Joaquin Valley than the entire South combined.

Not only that, but the gospel was on the move in California. We had evangelistic crusades, Bible colleges, tremendous growth in the church.

But then something happened. Social pressures began to cause Christians in California to abandon the public square. Pastors, hoping to appeal to the masses decided they needed to "stick to the Word." And so the church withdrew from politics and separated itself from government.

Where did that get us?

California now has the highest gas tax, sales tax, income tax, and corporate tax in the nation. We lead the nation in debt. In fact, if you combine the debt of the next four largest states, their total debt still doesn't equal that of California. We lead the nation in poverty, and we lead the nation in homelessness. Not to mention our roads are terrible.

California is the author of no-fault divorce, a law that Reagan signed in 1970 which decimated marriage across the country. The transgender agenda is being heavily pushed in schools, and the sex ed material children are being taught is appalling.

We also lead the nation in abortion. California has aborted more children than the entire population of Canada. In many ways, this can be traced back to the decision of Christians to keep out of politics.

But God never intended for His people to stay out of government – quite the opposite.

Government was God's idea, one of His many gifts to humanity. God gave us government way back in the Noachic Covenant in Genesis 8 and 9. Why did He do that?

To tell us what He expects of us, humans created in His image, and to show us how to live together. It was a very basic outline of government – focused on respecting human life and how those who murder are to be dealt with – but it was the beginning of government as we know it, a starting point.

Aristotle said politics is the highest form of community because it includes morality and sociability.

Government and politics help us collectively answer questions like...



- How do we get along with one another?
- How do we do business?
- How do we live next door to each other?
- How do we agree what we're going to teach in schools?
- How do we determine what makes laws just or unjust?

Clearly the scope of government has grown since the days of Noah. So where does that come from? Is it just happenstance? Or does God speak into it?

Of course He does, and He calls the church needs to speak into the political sphere in order to guide and lead a just government.

Because if the church doesn't drive the culture, it adapts to it. And that's what happened in California.

I believe God is telling us as Christians that we need to wake up to our responsibility.

You've no doubt heard a lot about the separation of church and state. It's what many people stand on to argue that religion needs to be kept out of politics. But here's the problem... that concept is nowhere to be found in the Founding Fathers' documents.

I've read all of them. I've read the first 10 years of the congressional record; it doesn't exist.

That term comes from a letter written by Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Convention, but in that letter the separation that Jefferson talks about is meant to keep the state out of the church, not the church out of the state.

Sadly, though, if you examine our culture, you'll find that this inaccurate view of separation of church and state is what's informing the thoughts and actions of Christians across America. Many pastors even endorse this view right from the pulpit!

Consequently, all kinds of false ideas have worked their way into the church. For example, you may have heard that socialism is a Christian ideal. Now, the ideas of equality and fairness are certainly ethical, and it's easy to see why many well-meaning young people think of socialism as a system for compassion, in theory.

But there's a problem. In practice, it's awful.

Suppose there are two students, Adam and Jeff, taking a class together. Adam is getting an A because he's working hard and doing his homework. He stays up late burning the midnight oil. So he's doing really well.

Jeff, on the other hand, is not. He's sleeping in, partying too much, and not surprisingly, he's getting an F.

Here's what socialism does. We want to make Adam and Jeff equal, to give them an equal outcome. So the teacher takes two grades from Adam and gives them to Jeff. Do they both now have A's? No, they both have a C. But they're equal.

When it comes time for the next semester, Adam's not going to work as hard because it's pointless. And Jeff won't either. He'll just wait for a handout. Productivity will decrease.



If it sounds far-fetched, just look at Venezuela. It was the fourth wealthiest nation in the western hemisphere. What happened when they introduced socialism? Disaster. Within a handful of years, people were eating their zoo animals because productivity had dissipated. That's socialism.

Equal outcomes is not a biblical idea. The Bible says that we're to love one another and we've been created equal, not in capacity but in dignity. We are all created in God's image and are to be given equal dignity. That's a much different concept than equal outcomes.

And if you think capitalism's not in the Bible, it is. Take Proverbs 31:16–18 for example:

She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.

Or 2 Thessalonians 3:10:

For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work, shall not eat."

Every issue of government is in the Scriptures. But we have to study God's Word and go deeper.

I want to shift gears for a moment to talk about what government and the law do not do, then show you something truly amazing, miraculous even, that God accomplished through the law.

Genesis 15:6 says...

Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

The law of Moses was not instituted by God until 430 years after this moment in Scripture. So it's clear that Abraham and his descendants were not saved by adhering to the law, but by grace through faith.

This begs the question, why did God give the law in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy?

We'll consider this.

In Exodus, God delivered 3 to 5 million Jews out of slavery in Egypt. In the process, He displays miracles, destroys the Egyptian army, and cares for the needs of this millions-strong caravan.

On Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the law, the 10 Commandments. The first five commandments deal with Israel's relationship with God. The second five commandments deal with Israel's relationships with one another. As Moses returns from the mountain, he finds the Israelites throwing a wild idolatrous party, and he has to set some things straight.

He lays out the law, calls the people to obedience, and the Israelites set up a tabernacle (later a temple) where God becomes the center of their culture and community, and the entire nation continues to wander the desert for another forty years.

What was the greatest miracle of all throughout that entire experience?

The law made it possible for 3 to 5 million Jews to live at peace with each other without a police force or a standing army.



Under the law, the Israelites were held accountable to God and to each other. That's a big deal! Now what does this have to do with America today?

America has lived under one birth certificate longer than any other nation in the history of the world – and that birth certificate says, “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights.” This means you can't take those rights away. You can't give them away – and among those are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

You can't have liberty and happiness without life. And we are all about life. The Church has kind of walked away from the abortion issue because it's just not popular. And we're adapting to culture. We're not changing it.

Politics is done by addition and multiplication, not by division and subtraction. And you have to love folks, but you have to know what it is you stand for. And people aren't the enemy. They're the opportunity. And God gave us this law so that we could dwell together.

But good government only happens with good people, so as the Church, we cannot abdicate our responsibility.

I've heard Christians tell me they stay out of politics because government is dirty. You know what my response is? So is the Church. We're humans; we're fallible.

Or some will say, “I'm tired of voting for the lesser of two evils.” I always say, unless Jesus Christ is running for office, you're always voting for the lesser of two evils.

Take the former President, for example. He's the last guy I thought about voting for. When he came along, I wasn't so sure about him. He's been three times married, twice divorced. He was promiscuous. He said crazy things, and his tweets are too much at times.

But then one day I was reading out of Judges 14 about Samson. And I saw in Hebrews 11 that Samson is in the hall of faith. God put Samson in the hall of faith. But you read about his life, and he's raised in what would be the equivalent of a homeschool family. When he comes of age, the very first words out of his mouth are, “You know what? Mom and Dad, I want nothing to do with God. I want to go marry that pagan woman down in the Philistine territory. Go get her.”

He's selfish. He's narcissistic. He's a partier. He breaks away from everything his parents instilled in him. And he goes down to the Philistines and the scripture says he was in a prostitute's bed all night.

Yet... the spirit of the Lord came upon him. Really? Not just once, but twice in a prostitute's bed all night and the spirit of Lord comes upon him. The scripture says he went down to go pay off a gambling debt and the spirit of Lord came upon him.

You can't name one moral thing about Samson's life, not one. It's awful. They gouge his eyes out and the only thing he can do is get revenge on the Philistines to pull the temple down.

Why would God pick a guy like that? Why would God pick Samson? Judges 14:4:

(His parents did not know that this was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that time they were ruling over Israel.)



Samson was willing to do what God's people weren't. The Philistines were occupying territory that rightfully belong to God, and God used Samson to take it back.

Do our schools belong to God? "The earth is the Lords, and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1). Does the government belong to God? "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

I'm not talking about theocracy. I'm talking about the influence of the law that God gave which allowed millions of people to live at peace with one another for 430 years without a standing police force or an army.

And this wouldn't be a new concept for our nation. The fact is that God's law and the wisdom of Scripture have laid the foundation for American government since the beginning.

In Exodus 18:21, Jethro counsels Moses to select "men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain, and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens." Our founders read that passage and used it to form our representative system. Isn't that cool?

Then in Isaiah 33:22, we read...

*For the Lord is our judge,
the Lord is our lawgiver,
the Lord is our king;
it is he who will save us.*

Do you see it? Our three branches of government – executive king, legislative law giver, judicial judge. That's how our founders got the three branches of government.

But it's not all Old Testament, lest someone say that those passage don't pertain to us. Let's go to the New Testament, to one of my favorite passages in Galatians. Galatians 3:24 says...

So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

The idea is that the law is a schoolteacher to point us to Christ. It keeps us protected until faith comes.

You see, the church in America has, for the last 50 years, said the law's only there to show you that you can't keep it and you need to be saved by grace through faith. That's not what Paul says. Paul says the law is to be placed in society so that the laws of nature and nature's God are applied in principles that people can see.

For example, laws that say... That a baby is to be kept safe in a mother's womb. That you don't traffic another human being. That ideologies and compacts are important, and that covenants that you make with your people deserve a border.

Society is waiting for these scriptures to be implemented in such a way that we can live together. And God laid it out for us.

Liberty, like muscle, gets lost if you don't exercise it. Good government only happens with good people. We exercise the liberty God has entrusted to us. There's a quote in the stairwell at Harvard Law School that says, "The law is wise restraints that make men free."



How do restraints make you free? You apply restraints towards evil in order to pursue excellence. We give everyone that opportunity to apply restraints. We want to give them freedom to pursue excellence.

God wants us to apply godly laws to point people to Christ. And if the church doesn't wake up and understand its role in the public square, we're in trouble.

How will they know unless someone tells them? And if you think that we're supposed to cause the gospel to be truncated and myopic, you don't know the power of that gospel. Before us is an opportunity in a representative form of government to express ourselves, to stand for God's truth.

You want to protect freedoms? Exercise them. If you can't do that, then don't decry the decline of the culture in which you live. You've been given a gift by God – designed in the Old Testament and given to the church so that we would honor a nation that has experienced more blessing than any other nation in the history of the world.

The problems of America are universal to every other culture in the world. But the blessings of America are unique. Fight for them.

Take Your Study Further

For passages about laws and government: See Genesis 9, Exodus 18, Exodus 20, Psalm 19:7-9, Matthew 22:36-40, Romans 3:19-20

For verses about freedom: See Psalm 119:45, Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18, John 8:36, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 5:1

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