

GOD, GOVERNMENT, AND THE CHRISTIAN VOTER

(Note: When elections drew near, I encouraged church members to vote and taught from the following outline so that their votes might be guided by biblical principles and values)

I. WELCOME

II. THE PURPOSE OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-5)

A. To administer justice in accordance with God's laws, whether written on the human heart or revealed in Holy Scripture

B. To praise those who do what is right and punish those who do what is wrong; to prevent evildoers from hindering the individual, the family, and the Church from fulfilling their God-given roles and callings; to secure for them ordered liberty, which is to say, maximum freedom within the bounds of divine law

C. To promote peace, flourishing, and good order in society at large, thereby securing an environment in which the gospel can go forth and God's redemptive purposes can be accomplished in the world

III. THE DIVINE LIMITATIONS PLACED ON CIVIL GOVERNMENT

A. NOT to provide material sustenance for individuals (Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:6-13; 1 Tim. 5:8)

B. NOT to raise/educate children (Deut. 11:17, Eph. 5:4)

C. NOT to proclaim salvation or usurp the worship of God (1 Tim. 3:15)

D. But SIMPLY to serve God in the administration of justice; to promote peace, human flourishing, and good order in society, thereby securing blessing from God and the worldwide advance of the Gospel.

IV. BIBLICAL MARKS OF A GOOD GOVERNMENT

A. Mark # 1: It acknowledges God as Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge, and Jesus Christ as the God-appointed Ruler of the kings of the earth, and the One who now holds all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18f; Col., 2:10; Rev. 1:5).

B. Mark #2: It acknowledges mankind's religious ignorance, curiosity, and diversity, and therefore a citizen's corresponding right to freedom of religious inquiry and practice, so long as these are consistent with the law of God.

C. Mark #3: It acknowledges the sanctity of human life in the sight of God, and therefore seeks to protect it at every stage, from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death. In our time, this principle speaks to the following issues:

- Abortion
- Euthanasia
- Cloning
- Capital Punishment (which is ordained of God for the administration of justice, the protection of society at large, and the instruction and warning of all citizens, Gen. 9:6)
- The right to bear arms for the purpose of the defense of oneself, one's family, and one's neighbors

D. Mark #4: It acknowledges the divine institutions of monogamous heterosexual marriage and the traditional nuclear family, and so seeks to encourage and protect them for the discharge of their God-given roles (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:22-33). In our time this principle speaks to the following issues:

- Divorce
- Polygamy
- Fornication
- Homosexual relations and marriage
- Gender dysphoria and consequent medical interventions
- *In vitro* fertilization
- Pornography
- Education (it should encourage home-schooling, religious education, private education)

Quote: "The sagacity of a nation is the saga of its families written large."

E. Mark #5: It acknowledges the purpose of God in creating diverse nations, and also the corrupting influence of power and/or money, and therefore insists that civil government should remain national (and not global) and limited (and not big) (Gen. 11; Acts 17:22ff)

Note: The wisdom of our American Constitution

- Separation of powers (Legislative, Judicial, Executive)
- Enumeration of powers (what specific powers belong to each of the three branches)

- Federalism (a few powers belong to the Federal Government, the rest to State Governments)
- The modern crisis of an activist judiciary, which undermines these constitutional principles
- “Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely.” – Lord Acton

F. Mark #6: It acknowledges the corrupting influence of power and/or money, and the corresponding temptation of some nations to violate the rights of others through imperialism and tyranny, and so insists upon maintaining a strong national defense:

- Scriptural problems with pacifism
- Note on Just War Theory (Augustine)

G. Mark #7: It acknowledges the divinely limited role of human government, and so takes from the people only enough money (taxes) and property to fulfill that role, leaving the bulk of the nation’s wealth in the hands of the people to do with as they will.

Quote: “The theory of the Communists may be summed up in a single sentence: The abolition of private property.” – Karl Marx

H. Mark #8: It acknowledges that good governments are God’s provision for challenging bad governments to become better governments, and so strives, non-violently if possible, to advance its principles world-wide (Romans 13:1f)

V. HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD EVALUATE PARTIES, CANDIDATES, AND PROPOSITIONS

A. Parties: Check out the party platform, comparing it with the above principles

B. Candidates:

1. Check out the Person: Faith, personal history, character
2. Check out the Party Affiliation, together with the Party Platform
3. Check out the Policies and Record: Trending biblical or non-biblical?
4. Biblical Litmus Tests:
 - God-honoring, Christ-honoring
 - Pro-life
 - Pro-family
 - Advocates for limited government
 - Advocates for citizen’s right to own and bear arms for self-defense
 - Advocates for strong national defense
 - Advocates for religious freedom within the bounds of biblical law

C. Propositions: Biblical or non-biblical; passing or failing the litmus tests above

