

The Prattmont Church of Christ is just what the name suggests, a church that belongs to Christ. We are not a denomination; we are simply a group of Christians trying very hard to practice the teachings of our Head, Jesus Christ. The New Testament offers a complete pattern for what each local church should be like—its organization, its worship, its work, etc. We are committed to following that pattern. We cordially invite you to attend our services. We would also welcome any comments or questions about this bulletin.

TIMES OF SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Classes.....9 A.M.
 Worship 10:00 A.M.
 Worship/Bible Study..5 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 P.M.



Weekly Bulletin
 September 26, 2021

Our Responsibility to Our Government

by Edward O. Bragwell, Sr., edited by Bryan Gibson

Conscientious Christians are in a quandary about what to do with a government that seems very out of touch with virtues like justice and righteousness. They even wonder if they should honor such a government by submitting and paying taxes to it. They, like Lot, “vex their souls” as they observe government sanctioned and, all too often, government promoted immorality. Many of them work hard to bring about a change for the better through the election process, only to have their hopes dashed by defeat. All too often, even when the ones they support win election, once they take office, they turn out to be no better (and maybe worse) than those previously in office. It seems that ethical and moral corruption is no respecter of political parties. So what is a Christian to do?

The first thing he needs to do is remember that his generation is not the first to have to wrestle with this problem. In fact, every generation of Christians from the very beginning has faced this problem. The first Christians lived under one of the

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most immoral and oppressive governments imaginable—the Roman empire. The immorality of the Caesars would shock the sensibilities of anyone with a sense of decency about him. Their antagonism from time to time against Christians, is one of the more documented facts of history. Yet, it was to those first century Christians, that the Lord’s words and apostles’ writings were addressed concerning their responsibility to civil government. We have those words recorded in the New Testament and they apply to us today as much as they did to them. The fact that our government officials leave a lot to be desired in their personal and public lives does not relieve us of our responsibility to follow the instructions concerning governments left to us in Scripture.

Firstly, we are taught to recognize that civil powers are ordained of God. Not just certain civil powers, but all. “The powers that be are ordained of God” (Romans 13: 1-2).

Secondly, we are taught that they are the servants of God (Romans 13: 4). As servants of God, they are serving under the “King of kings and Lord of lords.” This phrase was applied to the heads of some of the great ancient empires in the Old Testament. It was applied to the King of Babylon and the King of Persia (Ezra 7:12; Daniel 2:37, 38). The idea was that these great rulers had dominion over other rulers in their vast empires. Similar language was applied to God, depicting His dominion over all the kings and nations of the earth (Psalm 22:28; Daniel 2:21; 4:17, 25-32; 5:21).

Civil rulers serve as God’s avengers upon the earth. The Christian must not avenge himself. He must leave that to God (Romans 12:19-21). God’s ultimate vengeance will be played out at the great Judgment Day. But in the meantime, he has an avenger that will execute God’s temporal judgment upon evildoers. That avenger is civil power (Romans 13:4). So it is not

the business of the Christian to “get even” nor take the law into his own hands. But instead, he should do good to those that despitefully use him and turn it over to God to take vengeance. That He will do either through the civil powers, or defer it until He comes again to judge the world. Even ungodly governments are servants of God in that they serve His purposes as punishers of all evildoers, even though they themselves may be evildoers. Assyria was a good example of this principle. Assyria was a brutal power, but it became God’s servant to punish ungodly Israel (Isaiah 10: 5-7). Likewise Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was an evil and ruthless despot, but God called him “my servant” as the one chosen to punish Judah for her apostasy (Jeremiah 25:9; 27:6).

Thirdly, we are to conscientiously obey their laws (Romans 13: 5; 1 Peter 2: 13-17). Paul makes it clear that obeying their laws is tantamount to obeying God’s ordinance (Romans 13:2). There is only one revealed exception—when civil laws contradict God’s other laws (Acts 5:29).

Fourthly, we are to pay all taxes, customs, etc., due to the governments under which we live (Romans 13:7; Matthew 22:21).

Fifthly, we are pray for them (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Sixthly, we may exercise rights given by them. Paul did not hesitate to exercise, and at times to demand his right to protection as a Roman citizen (Acts 16:27, 38; 25:11).

As bad as government seems to be sometimes, even bad government is better than no government. As frustrating as the evils we see in the governments of this world can be, we as Christians cannot allow ourselves to refuse or to neglect a sacred command to “honor the king” (1 Peter 2:17)—even if that “king” is not the one we would have chosen.