

David O. Cofield
CrossRoads Baptist Church
July 4, 2010 10:15 a.m.

Romans 13:1-7; I Timothy 2:1-4

“Christian’s Response to Government”

The following is a direct quote from Dr. Richard Land:

“America is fundamentally distinct from all other countries in its founding, in its national life, and in the values, rights and privileges it confers upon its citizens. In other words, America is exceptional. And if it is exceptional in its domestic character, in what it offers to immigrants in search of a better life, then it would follow that America is exceptional in what it has to offer to the global community.

America is not an ethnicity or mere geography, but a creed, a set of first principles to which we pledge allegiance -- freedom, human dignity, self-government, and equality. Anyone who pledges allegiance to these values can consider himself or herself an "American."

America has been blessed by God in unique ways -- we are not just another country, but neither are we God's special people. I do not believe that America is God's chosen nation. God established one chosen nation and people: the Jews. We are not the new Israel. We cannot assume "God is on our side." We are not God's gift to the world.

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America does not have a special claim on God. Millions of Americans do, however, believe God has a special claim on them -- and their country.

America has been blessed in manifold ways. When you look at our resources, our protection by two oceans, our standard of living, can you argue that America has not been uniquely and providentially blessed? The natural resources that lie within the confines of our borders are without parallel anywhere in the world: not just rich, arable land, but vast resources of iron, coal and oil under the ground. We didn't put them there; we were just led to the place where they were.

We have had the opportunity to enjoy them and to benefit people around the world with them. Perhaps the most fertile land on the planet is our Great Plains.

We have become the breadbasket for the world. We feed much of the world's population, in part because we are good farmers, but also because we believe in private ownership of land and property. Can you name a nation that in any way can claim to have been the recipient of God's unearned blessings to the measure that we have been?

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End of quote by Richard Land is president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Brave men and women have given their lives for our freedom and we celebrate that with great thankfulness. But real freedom is for you to live however you want; it is freedom to live as you ought. Living however you wish is legalized bondage. Living how you ought is real freedom.

I call it Ritual Freedom versus Real Freedom.

What kind of freedom do we have today?

We have a debt that is out of control. I heard just yesterday \$13.5 trillion which is an average of \$42,000 per person in America.

You can go to usdebtclock.org and see it grow.

We have a debate of what is morality. Over 30 years ago the Supreme Court thought they would settle the issue of abortion once-and-for-all, but they didn't.

Today, mothers can be convicted for giving birth to babies while they were on crack and yet if that same mother had

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an abortion prior to birth, that would be free. Is that real freedom?

We have a deadly root of self-interest fueled by the love of money.

A democracy can not survive without morality.

Charles Carroll, signer of the Declaration of Independence, insisted: “Without morals a republic cannot subsist any length of time; they therefore who are decrying the Christian religion, whose morality is so sublime and pure...are undermining the solid foundation of morals, the best security for the duration of free governments” (as quoted in Steiner, 1907, p. 475, emp. added).

In an 1829 letter to James Madison, Noah Webster declared: “[T]he Christian religion, in its purity, is the basis, or rather the source of all genuine freedom in government....and I am persuaded that no civil government of a republican form can exist and be durable in which the principles of that religion have not a controlling influence” (as quoted in Snyder, 1990, p. 253, emp. added).

The first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, John Jay, maintained; “Only one adequate plan has ever appeared in the world, and that is the Christian dispensation” (1893, 4:52, emp. added).

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George Washington proclaimed to the entire nation in his farewell address that religion and morality are the indispensable supports of political prosperity, the great pillars of human happiness, and a necessary spring of popular government (1796).

Quotes from <http://apologeticspress.org/articles/308>

In our text of Romans 13 and I Timothy 2, look at something they did not have and something we need that they did have.

They did not have a flag waving day to celebrate their nation.

It is alright to be patriotic and wave the flag and celebrate our Independence as long as it does not become an idol. But patriotism can become an idol just like anything else could.

What did the readers of Romans have? Nero was their president, a bloodthirsty sicko who invented his own stadium sport of feeding Christians to lions in the Coliseum. That was at weekends. Weekdays he simply had Christians drawn and quartered, where you tie the four limbs to four horses and then whip those horses, and four

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horses go in four directions each with a fourth of your body. At his State Dinners, Nero would dip Christians in pitch and resin, tie them to a pole, light at match, and allow them to illuminate his banqueting hall.

What did they have that we need?

1. A belief in the complete sovereignty of God.

They believed that God was the ultimate authority who put Nero on the throne.

Three times in this passage Paul indicates this. He is even called “God’s ministers” in verses 4 and 6.

Dan 4: 32: God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men & gives them to anyone he wishes.

Ps 75:7: God brings down one ruler and exalts another.

John 19:10: Jesus said to Pilate, ‘You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above’.

2. A submission to their rulers

- a. We are to submit so we won’t be punished. Verse 2-3
- b. We are to submit so that rulers will do us good.

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Verse 4 If there were no leaders, we would have anarchy in our nation.

- c. We are to submit for the sake of conscience. Verse 5
- d. We are to submit for honor. Verse 7
- e. We are to submit for the sake of the gospel. I Timothy 2:3-4

We need to live in such a way that the gospel is not hindered by what we do.

Only the gospel can really change a life. The government can outlaw pornography, but can do nothing about the issue of lust.

The government can outlaw murder, but can do nothing about the issue of anger.

Laws can keep a lid or cap on sin, but it can not change the source of sin.

Blind submission is never taught in Scripture when it comes to human relationships and especially when it comes to the government.

God is your ultimate authority, there might be occasions when it is appropriate to disobey a government if obeying it

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would result in disobedience to God: there's some biblical precedent for this:

Exodus: Pharaoh instructed midwives to kill babies. They disobeyed and hid them.

Daniel: Nebuchadnezzar forbade prayer. Daniel prayed.

Acts 5: The authorities banned preaching. The apostles kept preaching saying, 'We must obey God more than man'.

Now realize that when you do this, there are still consequences but a higher power of God is greater than man.

3. A commitment to pray for leaders. I Timothy 2:1-2

And we don't pray for God to kill the leaders, but instead we pray for good, and blessings, and protection.

This is the first importance according to Paul. It is easier to complain than it is to pray. But you don't have a right to complain until you have prayed.