

“Learn Not the Way of the Nations”

Thoughts on Government & Christian Participation in the Political Process

Introduction: Is this the worst it’s ever been?

"But I doubt much whether there ever was a time in the history of our country, when the horizon on all sides, both political and ecclesiastical — was so thoroughly black and lowering. In every direction, we see men's hearts "failing for fear, and for looking for those things that seem coming on the earth." Everything around us seems unscrewed, loosened, and out of joint! The fountains of the great deep appear to be breaking up. Ancient institutions are tottering, and ready to fall. Social and ecclesiastical systems are failing, and crumbling away. Church and State seem alike convulsed to their very foundations—and what the end of this convulsion may be, no man can tell."
—J.C. Ryle

Key Point: As believers in Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, we should not _____ the political process or _____ in it in the same manner as those who have no hope.

A Biblical Understanding of Human Government

1. Human government has been established by God in the world for the preservation of human _____ in order that societies might flourish.

Gen. 9:6—“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

2. Human government is established by God in order that “_____” might be promoted and “_____” restrained in human societies.

Rom. 13:4—for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

1 Pet. 2:13-14—¹³Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good

3. As Creator, God is the One who _____ what is “good” and what is “evil.”

Rom. 13:2-3—²Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,

Rom. 13:8-10—⁸Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Key Point: Recognizing these truths, insofar as it is possible for us, we should seek to _____ the intuitions of government to these ends.

Living as Christians in the United States of America

1. The governing authority of this country to which we are to be subject is the _____.

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”—Preamble to the Constitution

2. As citizens of the U.S.A., we have a duty to engage in the process of selecting those who will exercise _____ over us.

“But there is today, in our discussions about the ethics and duties of voting, a kind of negligent drift toward the exterior sign (“Vote!”) and away from the interior substance of that vote, namely the duty to choose an officer among the candidates put forth for election. The vote is the means, but the end, the duty, is truly to pick an officer for the office.”

—Matthew Mehan, “You Have to Vote for One of Them,” *First Things* 10.29.24

Key Point: To vote for or against a particular candidate for president involves voting for or against a _____, a _____, and a _____.

Lessons from Jeremiah 10:1-14

Jeremiah's Ministry:

"Jeremiah faced a hardened populace that had received God's grace over the centuries...He complained that the whole of society was corrupt. The people of God had become like the nations around them, a community of infidels. Even worse, they did not know Yahweh (9:2-8). The leaders ("shepherds": kings, priests, false prophets, and elders) were largely to blame for this corruption; they had become self-centered and had corrupted God's righteous and just kingdom ideals by their own ideals, by corruption of justice, and by oppression..."

—William VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*

1. God's people are exhorted not to _____ themselves the way that unbelievers do. (10:2)
"learn not the way of the nations"— *derek* — lit. a way, manner, or habit; fig. a course of life.
We are not to become _____!
We are not to become _____ by the things that trouble them!
2. Idolatry is foolish because it has no lasting _____ to it. (10:3)
"the customs of the peoples are vanity"— *hebel* — lit. vapor, breath; fig. vanity, temporary
"An idol is simply an object of trust that takes the emotional or practical place of God."—Mark Vroegop
* Idols are _____ things that can be used for good, but become evil when we value them above our Creator. (10:4)
* We need not fear the idols that the world worships because they cannot cause us _____ harm. (10:5)
3. The danger of idolatry is that we become like what we _____.
Jer. 10:8—*They are both stupid and foolish; the instruction of idols is but wood!*
Jer. 10:14-15—*Every man is stupid and without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols, for his images are false, and there is no breath in them.*
4. Instead of worshiping idols as do the nations, God's people are to worship the _____ over all nations!
Jer. 10:7—*Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For this is your due; for among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is none like you.*
We are to _____ the Lord, and not the political and religious idols of unbelievers!
5. Unlike the idols of the world, the Lord can affect _____ and _____ change in us and the world.
Jer. 10:10—*But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure his indignation.*

Key Point: We must resist the temptation to misuse good things given by God by making them into ultimate things that we place our _____ in and _____ our lives around.

Questions for Reflection

- Do we really believe that God is sovereign?
Dan. 2:20b-21a—*"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. ²¹He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings*
Dan. 4:17b—*...the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.*
- What is our perspective on things even as the nations rage?
Col. 3:1-4—¹*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

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