

Thought for the Day 19th August - John Reed

Read Romans 13:1-8

You may recognise much of what I'm about to say. I've said it before, in the context of elections. But I think it bears repeating in these challenging times.

It's an appeal for us to both submit to and pray for our political leaders. And I think it bears repeating because we are hearing and reading so much negative comment about our politicians at the moment. With COVID-19 stalking the land, they are the ones tasked with leading us through this crisis. And therefore, understandably, they are also the ones who cop the blame when things go wrong.

So what attitude should Christians hold towards our politicians?

The very existence of government is God's doing. Because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), to avoid anarchy and restrain evil God gave us civil government (Genesis 9). It is God who "sets up kings and deposes them" (Daniel 2:21) because "the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes" (Daniel 4:17). God is sovereign over everything (Matthew 6:33). What God has planned, He will bring to pass, and no government can thwart His will (Daniel 4:34-35).

According to both Peter (1 Peter 2:13-15) and Paul (Romans 13:1-8) it is the God-given role of government to maintain law and order: to commend those who do right, and to punish those who do wrong. Both Paul and Jesus also specifically mention their right to collect taxes and revenues to cover the cost of government.

As Christian citizens, it is our responsibility to submit to those authorities that God has established (Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13); to do what is right (Romans 13:3), to show respect (Romans 13:5; 1 Peter 2:17), and to "render unto Caesar" that which we owe, whether that be by paying our taxes or in any other way (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13: 6). In the sphere of politics, as everywhere else, we are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16).

Of course, governments are made up of sinful human beings, and are never perfect.

In our society, we have the luxury of voting for our representatives. We should exercise that right with wisdom, by voting for those whose views most closely parallel our own. We should also encourage Christian people to get involved in politics so that, like Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon, they might be a voice for God in that environment.

We may also, at times, have to disobey human authority, because it is our calling to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). But even when it comes to that, we must accept the penalties and consequences that our human authorities impose.

Above all, we should pray for those in authority over us. As Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:1-4: "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."