



GOD'S PLAN FOR GOVERNMENT

In its relationship with civil governments the church has faced two opposite problems over the centuries: 1. *isolation*—sometimes forced upon it by a persecuting state, or self-imposed when the church withdraws from a godless state, and 2. *identification*—when the church's identity and agenda become too closely bound up with civil rulers. Rightly understood, both the State and the Church are given important yet distinct roles that should not be confused.

What, then, is the proper and biblical role of civil government in this age?

I. PROTECT ITS CITIZENS

"O king...renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed." Daniel 4:27
Paul said to the centurion.., "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?" Acts 22:25
Do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. Romans 13:3
Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above." John 19:11

II. PROVIDE JUSTICE

Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent-- the LORD detests them both. Proverbs 17:15
He is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Romans 13:3-4
"I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong....If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!" Acts 25:10-11
...Governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 1 Pet 2:14

III. PRESERVE SOCIAL ORDER AND THE RULE OF LAW

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan. Proverbs 29:2
Authorities...give full time to governing. Romans 13:6
(Pray) for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 2 Tim 2:2

IV. PRODUCE AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH GOD'S WORD CAN BE FREELY PROCLAIMED, BELIEVED, AND OBEYED BY ALL PEOPLE, ACCORDING TO THEIR FREE CONSCIENCE

But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out." Acts 16:37
...I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim 2:1-4

CONCLUSION: In a democracy or democratic republic, its *citizens* ultimately are the government. Since we elect our leaders, the responsibilities of government fall down upon each of us. Therefore, we must vote for leaders who will govern according to these biblical priorities, pray for them to faithfully do so, and hold them accountable if they do not.