

Sunday, February 16, 2025 am

LESSONS FROM OUR CALENDAR (4)

Concerning Governing Authorities

(Lessons from President's Day)

Today, we continue our examination of lessons gleaned from our calendar. Up to this point the lessons have been fairly steady, but that will change in the coming weeks. Tomorrow, our nation pauses to observe president's day. It is a legal holiday which means no government offices are open, no mail and no banking. Probably the biggest reminder is the sales of appliances and cars that commercialize everything.

What Biblical lessons come to mind as you think about this holiday?

I. President's Day

- a. Purpose – its original purpose is to commemorate the birthday (February 22) of George Washington, our first president. Lincoln's birthday is February 12th (technically, his birthday is observed the Monday before, but not as a legal holiday). The day has since come to be known as Presidents day. It did not become an official holiday for Washington DC until 1879, though it was informally observed, even before Washington's death in 1799. In 1885 it began to be observed by the nation. Special traditions associated with the holiday are few (cherry pie is a food associated with it). We mostly simply appreciate it as a day off with possible family gatherings.
- b. NOTE: As the church, we are not honoring any man, but as Christians the Bible has things to say about governing authorities and our responsibilities to them. That will be the focus of this lesson.

II. Lessons to consider

- a. Government is ordained by God -
 - i. **Romans 13:1-4** – Paul began by noting that we ARE to submit to governing authorities. He then notes that there is no authority except from God. Governing bodies are appointed BY God. In this Paul is saying they are ordained by Him (one of 3 institutions God ordained – the others being the home and church).
 - ii. We are reminded that rulers are not terror to good works, but to evil. This is typically the case, though there examples of governments that are hostile to good morals and laws. But even a corrupt government will often do some things for the benefit of its people.
 - iii. When he punishes evil doers he is exercising legitimate purposes. If we are doing evil, we ought to fear. In our government (America), while there are many things they do that we do not like or agree with, the general rule is that evil doers will face punishment.
 - iv. NOTE: Governments come and go – Daniel 2:21. As we consider governments, we realize that God is always in control. If He desires a change, He can make it happen (Psalm 75:6-7, *For exaltation comes neither from the east Nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, And exalts another.*
 - v. NOTE: We must consider the time in which Paul and Peter wrote of the government. Often, it was VERY hostile to Christians. Rome crucified Jesus. Others were executed and persecuted by authorities at various levels. It was during this time frame that our text was written. Our system of government is clearly flawed (as is any man-made organization), but it is far better than many places in this world. And while we may complain and be concerned about it, think about places where you COULD be and what first century Christians endured.
- b. Our responsibilities to governing authorities –
 - i. **We are called upon to submit to governing authorities**

1. Romans 13:1-2 – note the warning if you resist. Vs. 5 also reminds us to be subject.
 2. 1 Peter 2:13-17 notes that we are to submit not only to governments, but “*every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake.*” Peter gives a reason – because of the EXAMPLE we are to be setting for others (something we ought to think about).
 3. This includes obeying its laws, even if we do not like them. We will address the exception in a moment.
 4. NOTE again the timing when this was written.
- ii. Romans 13:6-7 – ***you are to pay your taxes.***
1. Consider Matthew 22:16-21 and the attempt to entrap Jesus. Some might argue that in paying taxes we are supporting an evil regime. NOTE that Jesus did NOT make an exception, nor did He comment on whether or not taxes are moral or not. He said this about a government that was about to illegally and immorally crucify Him.
 2. The truth is that while governments might support sinful causes, most of what they are doing is for order in society. With a good conscience (that is what Paul noted in Romans 13:5) you can reason that what you pay will be used for that portion of the government’s work.
 3. NOTE: In our system of taxation, we often have exemptions, deductions and tax breaks. You have the right to pay the minimal amount you are required! Keep that in mind as you file your taxes. BUT you must also be honest in reporting. That is another fundamental Biblical principal.
- iii. ***To be respectful to governments*** – Romans 13:7, 1 Peter 2:17 – we are to honor the king and governors. This can be a challenge when we are facing governing officials who are corrupt, self-serving and prideful. It is something to think about! NOTE that the interaction of Jesus with Pilate and Herod (though He did call him a fox – Luke 13:32), Paul and Peter with those in authority were respectful. Daniel (and even Shadrach, Meshach and Ebed-Nego) was respectful, even when they disagreed and faced harsh consequences. *In our society with its permitted free speech and continued criticisms, we need to be careful that we do not cross a line as we disagree with rulers and their policies.* Remember, this is about glorifying God – 1 Peter 2:15-16.
- iv. ***The one exception*** –
1. Acts 5:29. As Peter and the apostles stood before the council (again), they were rebuked for disobeying the command to cease teaching in the name of Jesus. They responded, “We ought to obey God rather than men.”
 2. Let us understand that this exception ONLY applies in matters where to obey means you will disobey God. We cannot use this verse as “carte blanche” to rebel against the government because we disagree with it. It is very limited in its scope. In the first century, Christians faced persecutions and death for refusing to bow to Caesar and the gods BECAUSE it was idolatry. Daniel kept praying when it was outlawed. Etc.
 3. There are FEW times in our government where we have to choose between obeying it and God (e.g., during Covid we were told “you can worship, but do not sing”; If a governing body made it illegal to preach against immorality, we would need to obey God rather than man; etc.). This is NOT the same as legalized abortion, homosexuality, divorce for any cause, etc. While legal, we do NOT have to

participate in these sinful activities. When can still be Christians with the immorality around us. AGAIN, consider the conditions Christians of the 1st century lived in (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9-10).

- v. **Praying for our leaders** – 1 Timothy 2:1-2. We are specifically called upon to pray for them. I believe the more ungodly they are the MORE they need our prayers. Note also what Paul said we pray for – *that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence*. It was not praying for radical change and the crushing of leaders. Leave that to God (cf. Romans 12:18-21).
- c. Appealing to Caesar –
 - i. Acts 25:10-12 – Paul defending himself before Festus (a Roman governor of Judea) against the false accusations of corrupt Jewish leaders, appealed to Caesar as a Roman citizen. His appeal was granted.
 - ii. The lesson for us is that we may use whatever LEGAL recourse we have at our disposal to improve our spiritual conditions with government.
 - iii. We are blessed to live in a country where we have rights that most in the world do not have. We take part in choosing most of our leaders. We have the right to protest. We have the freedom to formulate and support laws that honor God and His moral standards. In some cases, we have the right to say “no” to ballots proposing more taxes. We can serve on juries to ensure proper justice. It is written in our constitution (for now). To use such means is something we can avail ourselves of and perhaps we ought to do that more often than we do.
 - iv. HOWEVER, we MUST respect God’s boundaries. We should NEVER participate in an illegal activity, even if it is for a good cause. AND, we ought to consider how our conduct affects the cause of the Lord and His church as well – cf. 1 Corinthians 10:31 – do all to the glory of God.
- d. Do NOT put patriotism above Christ and His church.
 - i. We see shirts, “God, guns and country”. Proud displays of various politicians that not only endorse, but often they insult those who disagree. We have far too many who all but worship certain leaders or rights. They show more interest in their causes than proclaiming the gospel of Christ.
 - ii. This is why a church should NEVER become involved in politics. It is not its purpose, and it divides. 1 Timothy 3:15 describes the church as “the pillar and ground of the truth.”
 - iii. Recall Galatians 3:27-29 – we are all one in Christ. We should NOT put anything in this life ahead of that unity. One of the tragedies of the Covid-19 pandemic was the way it drove wedges between brethren. There was NO respect for those who disagreed on various issues. And some of my brethren online did not behave in a godly manner with their views. Shame on them!
 - iv. If you have strong political views, that is ok. BUT do not let it drive people away from the Lord’s body! Be respectful and try to consider where others are coming from. Consider 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 – Paul became “all things to all men” to win some. Titus 2:10 speaks of “adorning the doctrine of God”. That needs to be our goal (Romans 13:14 – *put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provisions for the flesh to fulfill its lusts.*)

Leaders, both secular and spiritual are worthy of honor. EVEN if you do not respect the man in office, you ought to respect the office. We need leaders and it is my hope that we will pause and thank God for our freedoms and our leaders, both past and present. Think about it!