

The Christian and Civil Government (11th)

(Our study today is a break from reviewing scriptural references of the confessions. It is an overview of the “religious right” and civil government.)

I ended the last broadcast by saying that, the Lord willing, we would continue our next study by looking at other scriptural references as listed in the confessions. Instead of doing this, I would like to present some things to further show the relevancy of this subject matter.

Part of my own journey began as far back as the late 1970's and early 1980's when I became interested in what is considered the “religious right.” In fact, in 1980, I was present at the “National Affairs Briefing” in Dallas, Texas, when Ronald Reagan addressed the Religious Roundtable which was established by Ed McAteer. I also attended other sessions of the Religious Roundtable at various places in the country, including one meeting in Washington, D.C. This was one part of the religious right which included other organizations as the Moral Majority which was likely the most popular and over reaching group at that time. Regarding the fundamental premise of such organizations, recently in a newsletter published by Chuck Baldwin (October 10, 2019 edition), he stated the following:

I well remember another press conference that I attended with the leaders of the RR [religious right—JKB] back in the day. The reporter's question was, “What exactly is it you want?” I thought the question was terrific. It gave us a chance to express some of the basic principles of truth that we believed and what we were all about. What an awesome opportunity. One of the key leaders of the RR back then answered by saying (and this is a quote), “All we want is a seat at the table.”

I almost gasped aloud. What? All of this effort, all of this adversity, all of this energy, all of this prayer and fasting was simply to give the leaders of the RR an opportunity to sit at the seat of power? At the time, I thought the answer was one man's opinion. Turns out it wasn't. He was truly speaking for many of them. To be sure, not all of them had this Machiavellian motivation, thank God. But for far, far too many of them, that is exactly what they wanted.

Well, the RR got their seat at the table. And now that Trump is president, it is a front-row seat. And I'm here to tell you, the RR will do almost anything to keep their seat at the table. When they protect Donald Trump, they are protecting themselves.

Whether you agree with Chuck Baldwin or not in his final assessment of the situation is not my concern. What I want to draw our attention to is the answer to the question of what the religious right wanted: “All we want is a seat at the table.” In other words, the religious right wants to impose “Christian principles” into civil government.

Allow me to be clear at this point. In my opinion, it is without question that anyone who knows and studies the Holy Scriptures, and is truly a Christian, knows that it is wrong to murder babies in the womb at anytime, that marriage is instituted by God and that it includes one man and one woman, that sodomy is condemned by God, that adultery and all other forms of sexual sins are wrong, as well as other sins that destroys society. Furthermore, I believe any nation that supports and upholds such practices (as well as other sins not previously listed) will come under the judgment of God and eventually fall. I also believe that the population (Christians and non Christians) should be involved in the political process and do all they can to see that our legislators and representatives pass laws against such moral sins and that our judges uphold them. Equally, Christian ministers are to preach against such sins, but when the

congregation of God becomes a political sounding board it has gone beyond the authority given to it by God. There is no record in the New Testament where any congregation or minister sought to change the policies of civil government under Israel, or Rome, or any other nation. History teaches us that when the house of God seeks to “have a seat” in the political arena it only caused the civil government to fight against it. In other words, when the congregation of the Lord goes outside of its ordained commission it generally causes more division than good. Yes, sometimes there is a fine line of distinction, but it is essential that that distinction be known and carefully guarded.

An incident recently occurred that further illustrated the importance of the issues of the Christian and civil government. This took place on February 12, 2020, in the state of Virginia. A minister from Warrenton, VA, was invited to give the opening prayer before the Virginia House of Delegates. His “prayer” was more of a sermon than a prayer. What he presented was written and as he read this so-called prayer he looked up at the audience from time to time while those around him (and I assume all the delegates) were standing with bowed heads. This may be his normal way of presenting prayers in his congregation but I rather doubt it. Nevertheless, I often hear ministers giving prayers where it seems they are preaching to the congregation more than actually petitioning the Lord. This “minister” delivered his message regarding social injustices from his perspective. He further spoke of the murder of the unborn and addressed the wickedness of perverted lifestyles and other sins and instructed the delegates of their duty to provide legislations against such things. He was finally interrupted by the Speaker of the House and she led in the Pledge of Allegiance. This man was invited to give an opening prayer and not to address the delegates as to their role and duty as he thought. One of the delegates was also a minister and he thought the former minister was out of line, which I agree.

(Please be patient with me again as I digress somewhat. While I likely would agree with many of the views of the minister invited to deliver the opening prayer, I believe it was wrong for him to seek to force his beliefs on the House of Delegates. Furthermore, I believe the minister who is a delegate should not be serving in such capacity. God calls His ministers to preach the gospel and not to seek political ambitions. Therefore, my opposition or agreement with either minister is not based on political party lines. Just as Caesar (civil government) does not have any place in the congregation of the Lord, it is not the place of the congregation to provide laws and regulations in the house of Caesar; i.e., civil government).

A couple of days following this incident, it was broadcasted on a “Christian news source.” At the end of the story, the audience was encouraged to contact the opposing minister and give their disapproval to his objections. The audience was further encouraged to also contact the Speaker of the House and voice their objections to her actions.

Yes, Paul did preach and exhort civil leaders such as Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and others. But he did it as he was requested to do so as he gave a defense against those who opposed him. Paul never sought out any leader in civil government nor did he seek an appointment with the government at any time for the purpose of instructing them concerning the laws of the land or the laws of God. Even the discourse by Paul on Mar’s Hill was at the request of the court in Athens. He did not go there on his own for the purpose of changing or stopping their governmental procedures.

Is it any wonder that the civil government is moving in more and more on the congregations of the Lord when they are seeking to persuade the government to follow Christian beliefs? Yes, the world, and even civil governments, will hate the truth of the gospel and persecute Christians, but when Christians seek to force their Christian beliefs on a government that provides religious liberty for all religions according to the laws of that government, it is like jumping into the den of lions and pulling their mane. Obviously, the idea that the civil government is to be connected to the congregation is that which flows from the Protestants and not the historic position of the Baptists.

However, our time is up for today. The Lord willing we will continue our study of this topic in our next podcast. May “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all.”