January 27, 2013
Romans 13:1-7

"Separation of Church and State"

Romans 13

[1]Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. [2]Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. [3]For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. [4]For 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. [5]Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. [6]This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. [7]Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Idaho sheep rancher: was approached one day by a stranger in a suit. He said, If I can guess how many sheep you've got, may I have one? Thinking this to be impossible the rancher agreed. You have 1,795 sheep. Stunned by the correct answer the rancher told him to choose his sheep. The man selected an animal and slung it over his shoulder and started to walk away. The rancher said, Hey if I can tell you who your work for can I have that

animal back? OK You work for the government. How did you figure that out? Well, put my dog down and I will tell you. Not much respect for government in America today.

A lot has happen in the 236 years since our nation began. A group of people left England to start a new colony in the Americas and settled at Cape Cod. They left England because of the King was endorsing a state church. These people wanted to worship Jesus without the mandates of the King. On November 11, 1620, the first charter of government was adopted and signed in the new land. This document was the Mayflower Compact. In part it states:

"In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, and Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern part of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid;" This first charter of our present government makes it clear, that this nation was founded under and for Christian principles. This country was founded to "advance the Christian Faith." Today there are many organizations and political parties that are trying to push Christianity out of our nation and make it where the name of our God cannot be mention in public.

On July 4th, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was signed. In part it stated states: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are

endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Even our declaration of independence states that our creator blessed us with this nation for the purpose of the freedom to worship our Lord without persecution.

The Northwest Ordinance of August 7th, 1789 even stated that religion was necessary for a good government. It states in part: "Religion, morality, and knowledge being essential to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall be forever encouraged."

Our forefathers knew without religion in our government and schools we were doomed for self-destruction. The first textbook used in our school systems was the Holy Bible; today in most schools the Bible cannot be opened in school. Our forefathers were concern about our religious freedom, so they even included it in the first amendment of our constitution.

June 15, 1790 Amendment I:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." It states that no laws or judgments could be made prohibiting our freedom to worship nor could the government force its citizens to worship a certain religion or be a member of a certain denomination.

It is interesting to me that those who debate **for** a separation of church and state and those who debate **against** separation of church all quote the same stuff. Just listen to stuff

that is on both sides of the argument from the mouths of the founding fathers. John Adams our first vice-president and second president wrote in 1798: “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” This is the same John Adams whose writings indicate that he rejected the trinity, the deity of Christ and became a Unitarian.

President Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1781: “I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever. The same guy who penned the “Wall of separation between church and state quote in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association.

Benjamin Franklin was quoted in the Constitutional Convention of 1787 as saying, “God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?” Old Ben, you know the $100 dollar bill Ben also said: “When a religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and, when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support it, so that its professors are obliged to call for the help of the civil power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.

I could go on and on, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Calvin Coolidge, John Quincy Adams, George Washington, Franklin Roosevelt…they all said enough and enough of their words were written down enough that they all contradict themselves on God, the State and the relationship between the two. I will not even mention that variously they owned slaves, engaged in sexual affairs, did what was wrong, said what was wrong and accepted what was wrong. Surprise!! I don’t want to burst anyone’s bubble, but they

were all…(look to the right)…(look to the left)…shhhhhh...(whisper) they were all people. Prone to sin…born in sin, they are of the same ilk of the scripture that says, "The heart of man (not gender) devises evil continually. Oh and by the way…(look to the right)…(look to the left)…Shhhhhh…(whisper) so are we.

The core problem with this daily dilemma is the same core problem we see in dilemma after dilemma. We can quote the founding fathers, Martin Luther King, Gloria Steinem or Tom Hanks in Philadelphia all we want but they are the problem. Are they authorities? Rather are they authoritative? Now with the founding fathers they might be authoritative in regards to what they meant but as I have already shown there are enough contradictions in their sayings and writings to keep us all arguing until another Fourth of July rolls around and we probably still wouldn't agree.

There are a growing number of Christians who think that believers should not be involved in government and politics. There are several reasons for this attitude:

1. They are afraid of getting caught promoting a social gospel (churches which are only trying to make the world a better place…to go to hell from)…substituting culture for Calvary…never talk about getting saved, or the blood of Jesus. This is a viable concern, we don't want that. But we shouldn't throw the baby out w/ the bathwater! Yes, we need to keep our focus on introducing people to Jesus but it will be my privilege today to show you from the Bible that involvement in government IS part of the work of the church.

2. There are some who have given up hope. These are the folks who say, "it's too late for America", we're past the point of no return…all that remains is judgment.

Well, I see their point, we are moving swiftly to judgment if we don't repent and come

back to God…but I look at my children, and I say, I will not give up on America! I look at Rom. 13 and say, I will not give up on America! There IS hope, if (and that's a big if), if perhaps we do II Chronicles 7:14; 14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Read the book of Judges…clearly, our God would rather forgive and restore, than judge! Over and over, Israel would turn their back on their Godly heritage. But, they would repent, and God would forgive them and restore them…but it was always conditional! (If)

3. Then there are the real skeptics. The ones who believe that all politics are dirty…it's beneath us as Christians…all politicians are crooks…my citizenship is in heaven…all we're voting for is the lesser of two evils." In reality these people are just tired of scandals, and so tired of the political news section of the paper looking like a tabloid, they've lost their heart to be involved at all.

4. Then there are the Christians who have been intimidated…and they've heard the ACLU and the media and professors talk much about the separation of church and state—that they've actually started to believe in it. In case you don't know, that phrase never appears in the Constitution! (however it is found in Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto!)

When the First Amendment was passed it only had two purposes.

1. There would be no established, national church for the united thirteen states. To say it another way: there would be no "Church of the United States." The government is prohibited from setting up a state religion, such as Britain has, but

no barriers will be erected against the practice of any religion. Thomas Jefferson's famous "wall of separation" between church and state comment was made in a letter to a group of Baptist clergymen January 1, 1802 in Danbury, Connecticut, who feared the Congregationalists Church would become the state-sponsored religion. Jefferson assured the Danbury Baptist Association that the First Amendment guaranteed that there would be no establishment of any one denomination over another. It was never intended for our governing bodies to be "separated" from Christianity and its principles. The "wall" was understood as one directional; its purpose was to protect the church from the state. The world was not to corrupt the church, yet the church was free to teach the people Biblical values. **It keeps the government from running the church but makes sure that Christian principles will always stay in government.**

2. The second purpose of the First Amendment was the very opposite from what is being made of it today. It states expressly that government should not impede or interfere with the free practice of religion. The purpose of the separation of church and state in American society is not to exclude the voice of religion from public debate, but to provide a context of religious freedom where the insights of each religious tradition can be set forth and tested. As Justice Douglas wrote for the majority of the Supreme Court in the *United States vs. Ballard* case in 1944: The First Amendment has a dual aspect. It not only *"forestalls compulsion by law of the acceptance of any creed or the practice of any form of worship"* but also *"safeguards the free exercise of the chosen form of religion."* The First

Amendment was a safe-guard so that the State can have no jurisdiction over the Church. **Its purpose was to protect the Church, not to disestablish it.**

I have already stated that the problem with this dilemma and most others is a problem of authority. I have chosen to submit to the authority of God and to what God has purposed in his Holy word. So it is to that word to which I turn to understand what my perspective and I think in a large part what the thoughts of those founding fathers may have been.

First, our scripture today tells us that "God is sovereign over government." He said, "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except..." Except what? "...except that which God has established." Now that doesn't mean God appointed Khadafi & Sadam Hussein & Hitler & Stalin & used them as puppets on His string. But it does mean that God has established the principle that a government is to be in charge of society. And God can accomplish His work & His will in all kinds of government - sometimes through them & sometimes despite them. We think that a republic based on democracy is the best because it has served us well for 228 years. But we must understand that our Constitution was written assuming that the citizens of this land would be moral, God-fearing people. That's the only way democracy will work because democracy becomes whatever the people are. If the people become pagan & immoral & violent, then the government becomes pagan & immoral & violent. If you put 5 people on an island, 3 men & 2 women, & the 3 men vote to molest the 2 women, that's democracy. But that's democracy at its worst. So democracy has the capability of becoming an evil form of government if the people are evil. And I'm

concerned about America.

Secondly, another thing this scripture teaches is that government officials are to be servants of God. Three times it says that they are God's servants. In reality you are to serve God in whatever job you have. There is a principle that is stated in Deuteronomy 28:1-6, & it is repeated later on in that same chapter. Here is the principle: "If a nation obeys God it will be blessed. If it disobeys God it will be cursed." Toynbee, the great historian, wrote, "Of the 22 civilizations I have studied, 19 of them fell, not because of external forces, but because of internal moral decay." They died from within. Our Constitution says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." Our country started by recognizing that we have a Creator, and because of Him we have the rights that we enjoy in this country.

Finally, this passage of scripture teaches that: "Christians are to be submissive to the governing authorities." "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities." As Christians, we are to be in submission to the government even though we may not agree with it. Now there is one exception to the rule. And that is whenever the law of the land conflicts with the Law of God. Then, as Christians, we are to obey the Law of God & not the law of this land. When Daniel was told that he could not pray, that was the law of the land. The Law of God said, "You are to pray." Daniel went ahead & prayed even though he disobeyed the law of the land. When Peter & James were told not to teach or preach at all in the name of Jesus, that was the law of the land. But they disobeyed the law of the land & obeyed the Law of God as they continued to preach in the streets about Jesus,

even though they were arrested & tried because of it. It may not be long until the government begins to tell the church what she can & cannot preach. We may not be far from the time when we're told that we cannot call sin, sin because that would be considered a hate crime. But when that time comes, we must still speak the truth. We must call sin a sin, & we must not compromise the truth of God, even if we put our own lives in peril. But please realize that we accomplish very little by rebelling against government. You can usually accomplish more if you work within the system. In 1992 and 1994 California elected many Christians to serve on school boards. People had become alarmed about the direction their schools were taking, so they went out and recruited Christians who were willing to serve, and then elected them to office. And because Christians are now in the majority on many school boards, they are changing the direction of many of the schools. They haven't brought back the read prayers before school each day, what they have brought back is a sense of accountability. They have instituted reward for hard work and reward for poor work. And, until they take Geometry tests out of school there will always be prayer in public school.

We need to learn that lesson. We must no longer think that we have to keep our mouths closed. We must stand up and speak and begin to work within the system. Because in reality, in our form of government. All of us are the state. We are the government. How can you separate yourself from yourself?

Somebody has well said that "Every nation gets the government it deserves". Is ours getting better or worse? During Paul's day the Roman government filled the Coliseum

with 50,000 or more to watch Christians be murdered by wild animals and for sport. Underneath in the Catacombs other Christians prayed to God to change what was going on above. He did and He can.