

Apply The Word

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Message Info

Title:

The State: God's
Servant

Speaker:

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Scriptures:

Various

Theme: Watch how you step in submission to God by honoring civil authorities.

Introduction: The "state" is any civil governance from the local up to the national levels. God's word tells us, as Christians, how we should think about and engage with the various civic authorities that the Lord has instituted (Rom 13:1; 1 Pet 2:13-14). He commands us to be submissive and deferential toward these authorities, as we will be held accountable by him for how we honor them. We need to learn how to relate to them skillfully and carefully.

Here are 3 points to keep us on track in how we engage the state:

1. The state is instituted by God

The state is not a wicked invention of Satan that must be resisted at all points. Instead, it is instituted by God, for our good (Rom 13:4, 6). Therefore, we are not to just withdraw from society. We must rightly engage. Paul makes clear the state's role: to punish evil and to support good. The state has been given the necessary force to ensure stability and peace. It 'bears the sword' to punish evildoers, by God's design. We should pray for our leaders that they might serve justly and that we might lead quiet and godly lives (1 Tim 2:1-4).

2. The state cannot be trusted like God

Unfortunately, the examples of tyrannical and destructive governments are many. History is filled with terrible tyrants who have caused great destruction and suffering. Our pattern of submission does not mean that we *always* obey. There is a time for righteous Christian resistance. Further, the state has a limited domain of authority and does not have the right to encroach upon what God has granted to other spheres (church and family). We should not look to the government to solve our problems and to provide for our needs. As the government seeks to do so, it becomes bloated and out of life. As God's people, our allegiance must be to him—even if the government opposes us.

3. We must remain subjected to God

We must live in submission to the state if we claim submission to God. Yet there will be times when we must resist the state out of our greater submission to God (Acts 5:29). The state cannot be neutral. It has an idea of what is right and good that it is seeking to accomplish. As God's servants, those ideas should align with his truth.

Questions:

1. Do you view authority as good and God-given? Do you gladly submit?
2. Do you thank God for our civil authorities? Do you pray for them.
3. Are you willing to resist unjust authorities for Jesus' sake?