

GOVERNMENT IS A GIFT FROM GOD

Think about the many gifts God gives giving thanks for the many, varied, and incredible ways God has and continues to bless us. As you list those gifts in your mind, is “government” on the list? These days it is challenging to think of “government” or “politics” as a gift. It is much easier to be critical, frustrated, and distrustful of those serving in the government. Seeing government as a gift from God, something to be thankful for and supportive of feels like quite a stretch.

1 Timothy 2:1-3

*¹First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and **thanksgivings** be made for everyone, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.*

Romans 13:1-7

*¹Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. ²Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; ⁴**for it is God's servant for your good.** But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. ⁶For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing. ⁷Pay to all what is due them — taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, **respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.***

The governments referred to in Scripture were autocratic empires. Still, they were seen as gifts to fulfill God’s purpose of “peaceable life in all godliness and dignity” or in other words as instruments for promoting the common good.

In this country, we live under a democratic form of government. As the draft [Social Statement Civic Life and Faith](#) points out, “God’s power sustains and gives power to creation. Therefore, the principal criterion used to assess governmental and political authority is whether it increases power and its beneficial use among the people governed. Our Constitution preserves power for the people, which is **a radical gift** to the world and to our people. Since the Constitution was written, the U.S. has rightly expanded the definition of free people to include all persons, as God would have it.”

Our constitution which lays out this form of government, a radical gift, includes the First Amendment. This amendment does not prohibit or discourage the application of religious convictions to public life. The phrase “separation of church and state” is not found in the

First Amendment and is usually shorthand for non-establishment - which precludes favoring any particular religion or sect and gives people the freedom to worship and practice their faith as they wish (within the bounds of other laws). This is indeed a gift.

In Isaiah 45, God gave the gift of Cyrus, the Persian ruler, even calling him God's anointed, the Messiah, to deliver the people of Israel from Babylon. God continues to give us the gift of government for the common good, to give people freedom, and to promote justice and peace. When the government acts in this way, it is indeed a gift to be celebrated and honored.

Questions for reflection

1. What is your attitude or view of the government? What shapes that view?
2. In what ways might you see the government as a gift? How does that view change the way you speak about government officials and support the government?
3. When and in what ways do you experience the government **not** acting as the gift God intends it to be?
4. How often do you pray for the government?

Prayer:

Gracious God, we pray for our government leaders and public servants that they do their work in a spirit of wisdom, charity, and justice. Inspire them to use their authority to serve faithfully and to promote our common life. Guide our leaders to govern in such a way that all people enjoy a peaceful and just society. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen