

To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above."

Text: John 19:11a A 7/2/17 Daniel 4:28-37 1 Peter 2:13-17 Ps. 146 Resp. Ps. 33
Hymns: 39, 26, 528 (1-3, 13-15), 577

THOSE IN GOVERNMENT ARE THERE ONLY BECAUSE GOD ALLOWS THEM TO BE

- 1. Don't get too encouraged or discouraged over who is in office**
- 2. Open your eyes of faith to see GOD'S hand controlling governments**

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

As we prepare to celebrate our nation's independence, it's fitting for us to consider how our Lord wants us to look at those in government and the things they do that affect us and our world. Praise God that He doesn't leave you and me to struggle with these things on our own. As we're reminded today, **God** is in control of governments.

1

The setting for our text is Jesus' trial before Pontius Pilate at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. Pilate had told Jesus, "*Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?*" (Jn. 19:10). Jesus set Pilate straight by informing him, "*You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.*" The only reason Pilate held his government office was that God had allowed him to have it.

One thing we learn from this is that we shouldn't get overly encouraged or discouraged by who is in a government office. If we happen to agree with a particular person in office, then we need to watch out that we don't put too much trust in that person. Even if he or she is doing good things, we need to consciously keep in mind that it is **God** who is doing good through that person. Certainly we appreciate and support a good ruler. But as the psalmist advises us, "*Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them – the LORD, who remains faithful forever*" (146:3-6). If we put too much trust in someone in government office, we're giving him or her glory that belongs to God. We're placing too much faith in a person and not enough faith in God. We're allowing our sense of well being to depend too much on a human being, and not enough on God. We can't enjoy the full peace God wants us to have in knowing that **He** is in control; and no matter what the political situation may be from day to day, things in this world are always and eventually going according to **God's** plan.

If we happen to disagree with someone in government office, then we need to be careful that we don't become overly discouraged. He or she may even be doing things that are bad for our country. We need to remind ourselves of what Jesus told Pilate: "*You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.*" It is **God** who allows the rulers of this world to be in power. Was it fair that Pilate sentenced Jesus to death? Life isn't always fair. Yet Jesus, who could have easily resisted the authority of Pilate, did not. Jesus submitted to His

Father's will, and to Pilate as the man whom His Father had placed in his position of earthly authority over Him.

In our country we have the privilege of expressing our disagreement with government officials and of voting against them. But if they are in office, and we feel they're not doing what's best for our country, our worrying and fussing aren't going to change a single thing. Our worrying and fussing are only going to hurt us more. We need to look beyond our earthly leaders and stay focused on our Heavenly King. We read in Psalm 37, "*Do not fret because of evildoers.... Commit your way to the LORD. Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass*" (vv. 1, 5).

After 9-11 a lot of people asked, "Where was God? Why did God allow this to happen?" God is not the cause of evil in the world. James says, "*Do not be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ... God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.*" (1:13, 17, 16). God made everything, including us human beings, perfect. Adam's and Eve's sin made everything and everyone sinful. Sin is the source of evil in the world. People are sinful. Governments and government officials are infected with sin.

James goes on, "*Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed*" (1:14). God didn't force the Jewish leaders to turn against Jesus. That was their own doing. Nor did God force Pontius Pilate to hand Jesus over to be crucified. Pilate did that on his own.

Don't get overly encouraged when we have good earthly leaders. Remember, **God** is the real source of our blessings, not people. Likewise, don't get overly discouraged when we have bad earthly leaders, and end up being cynical and distrustful toward God.

2

When Jesus told His disciples that His enemies would take Him away and crucify Him, Peter told Him, "*Never, Lord! ... This shall never happen to You!*" (Mt. 16:22). From Peter's perspective, it was wrong. It was terrible. Jesus just couldn't let this happen! Jesus rebuked Peter: "*Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.*" Peter, a human being, tried to tell Jesus, God, the way things should be. Peter meant well. But Peter could only see things from his tiny human perspective. As God, Jesus could see the big picture. Jesus knew that He had to let the authorities put Him to death so that He could provide salvation for the world.

When Jesus' enemies took Him captive in Gethsemane, "*Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. ... Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me?'*" (Jn. 18:10-11). "*And [Jesus] touched the man's ear and healed him*" (Lk. 22:51). Peter was still struggling with seeing things from his **own** perspective, and relying too much on himself and not enough on Jesus. It's a good thing that none of us ever has a problem keeping things in perspective...

As Jesus told Pontius Pilate, all who are in government are there only because God allows them to be. Those in government are not in control. God controls people, governments, and nations according to His purposes. The Jewish officials weren't in control of Jesus. The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, wasn't in control of Jesus. As God Jesus had said, "**No one takes My life from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take**

*it up again” (Jn. 10:18). In their hatred for Jesus the Jewish officials brought Him before Pontius Pilate to have Him crucified. In his cowardice, Pilate had Jesus crucified. God took the evil deeds of Jesus’ enemies and turned them around to accomplish our salvation. “For God so loved the world that **He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16).***

Even when those in authority do bad things, God is still ultimately in control. Open your eyes of faith to see **God’s** hand controlling governments. Like Peter, we sometimes “can’t see the forest for the trees.” We can get so caught up in the day to day affairs of politics, politicians, and governments that we lose sight of the fact that God is in control. “Lord, please let this person be elected/stay in office.” “Lord, please don’t let” (insert the name of someone in government) “do this.” “What’s going to happen to us?” “What’s going to happen to our country?” “What’s going to happen to this world?” “*‘Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.’ The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Ps. 46:10-11). “And we know that God causes **all** things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ... What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ... Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Ro. 8:28, 31-32, 35-36, 38-39 NASB).*

Don’t get overly encouraged when we have good rulers. **God** is working through such rulers to bless us. Don’t worry and despair should we have bad rulers. God is still on His throne. The Lord does some of His best saving work when political situations are the worst and people have nowhere else to turn but to Him. In good times and in bad, God is always working for the salvation of souls. He is working to keep all of His children in faith, and to bring more and more people to believe in His Son and be saved.

Use the privileges we have in our free country to see to it that we have good government. Work and pray to support our government. Above all, place your trust in God and His Word. In evil times and in good, **God** is our Rock, and our salvation!

Trust not in princes, they are but mortal; Earth-born they are and soon decay.
Naught are their counsels at life’s last portal, When the dark grave doth claim its prey.
Since, then, no man can help afford, Trust ye in Christ, our God and Lord.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Blessed, yea, blessed is he forever Whose help is in the Lord most high,
Whom from the saving faith naught can sever And who in hope to Christ draws nigh.
To all who trust in Him, our Lord, Counsel and aid He doth afford.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

God the Almighty, the great Creator, Ruler of sky and land and sea,
All things ordained, and sooner or later They come to pass unfaillingly.
His rule is over rich and poor, His promise ever standeth sure.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen. (TLH #26:2-4)