

## Self-Government (Part 2)

**We Are All Under God's Authority**  
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We are going to begin this sermon by turning to Titus 3. Paul was writing to Timothy, reminding him of things he should be instructing the people in the congregation to be aware of and to do. I think it is good advice for everyone of us, seeing what is going on administratively in the government of the United States of America.

**Titus 3:1-3** Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

These verses contain sound advice that is especially hard to live up to in these days because of what is happening to us here in the United States, because what is happening is evil to its core. So many citizens are unaware of what is happening to their and their children's liberties; but happening it is, and essentially what Paul is saying is that we have to live with it and retaliate by exemplifying God's way in spite of it all. It is difficult not to get swept up into the disobedient spirit of the times, but we must discipline ourselves in order to provide a contrast to the attitudes and conduct of others.

We are living in dramatic times as a massive revolutionary, but bloodless, overturn of the American government, religion, economics, and education is taking place right before our eyes. This revolution has been going on for about one hundred years, but it is now reaching a critical point.

Listen to this quote from James Madison, who was one of the main framers of the Constitution of the United States. He said:

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal control from government would be necessary. In framing a government, which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control the governed, and in the next place oblige the government to control itself.

This is exceedingly difficult, historically provable, because human governments have two nasty traits: (1) They produce nothing tangible, but they are very costly to operate, and thus dramatically affect the economy. (2) They always grow until they control everything, and individual liberties are gone. God shows us the overall solution, and the overall solution to these problems is that each citizen must control himself, and that God will take care of the rest. We will see this as we go along. It seems almost simplistic, but we will find this is exactly the kind of government God Himself is operating.

When I was done giving my previous sermon, an email appeared in Richard's inbox that touched on the sermon's self-government subject, and it moved me to give *this* sermon. It was an article. Not a real long article, just about three pages. It was offered by a lawyer by the name of Doug Phillips, and it contained a very definite biblical and religious perspective to it. Listen to this title: "One Nation Over God."

Once one reads and then meditates on that title in relation to what he said in the article, one can see that he was implying in the conduct of their lives American citizens are demonstrating giving more authority to the nation than to God. In fact, the giving of more authority to the nation is so one-sided that God barely comes into the picture, and Doug Phillips cited a very interesting fact that was drawn from the newly-released *Webster's Dictionary, 1828* edition.

Listen to the way Webster perceived government in 1828. This was only 41 years after the American Constitution was ratified. Phillips cited what the dictionary said under the term "government." The very first definition is regarding *self-government*; not the American government, not *any* nation's government, but Webster's first comment was in regard to self-government, and Webster is thus implying that *this* is the primary and important factor in all conduct in relation to government. Other forms of government, including family and civil, are secondary to one's governing of oneself. This is because one's response to any form of government depends on how one governs oneself.

Regarding the term "government's implications of direction and regulation"—(Remember I gave you definitions of what the term "government" implied. I went into the Greek and showed you from that point of view.)—Webster's 1828 Dictionary uses this sentence to illustrate: "These precepts will serve for the government of our conduct." Let me put a couple of words in there. I am going to define government as I go along. "These precepts will serve for the direction and regulation of our conduct." That is what government does. It implies direction and regulation.

Another illustration Webster used regarding the term "government's implication of control and restraint" because the word "government" implies control and restraint as well. Webster's 1828 Dictionary gives this illustration: "Men are apt to neglect the government of their temper and passion." Let me put the definitions in there again. "Men are apt to neglect to control and restrain their temper and passion." I think you can readily see that Webster clearly focused on self-government in his definition.

I stated toward the end of my previous sermon that self-government is absolutely required of the Christian. God will not take away His gift of free-moral agency by brutally forcing our response. Our response to Him must be voluntarily given, and this is why Herbert Armstrong's comment on godly character begins with this statement. I am going to give you again what he said.

Godly character is the attainment of the ability, in a separate independent entity of free moral agency, to be able to discern right from wrong—the true values from the false—truth from error—the right way from the wrong; and then to make the CHOICE or DECISION, even against self-desire, impulse or temptation; plus the WILL and self-discipline to resist the wrong and DO the right.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary, and the author of the article "One Nation Over God" together are saying that self-government is the most important of all aspects of government and precedes one's response to all other governmental forms. Now God agrees with this.

I am going to give you a three-step formula drawn from Scripture as pertains to our personal relationship with God in regard to governing ourselves. I want you to turn first to I Peter 1:13-16. I want you to notice that verse 13 begins with the word "Therefore." That is a collective word indicating that a conclusion is to be reached right following that, and it is the conclusion to what he

said in the first twelve verses. In those first twelve verses his comments were on what an awesome, wonderful tremendous gift we have been given by God in His calling. What we are to do with it is what the word "Therefore" is going to be followed by.

**I Peter 1:13-16** Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

By urging us to gird up our minds, Peter clearly provides a true foundation for our proper responses to the Father and Son. We are to gird our minds. That means to be constant in preparation to fix our minds so that the aim and purpose of all of our conduct is holiness. And so, with a minimum of words, he is saying that we must direct, regulate, control, restrain. Do you see anything about government there? Do you see anything about self-control there, or self-government? Absolutely! Peter is saying we must direct, regulate, control, and restrain our conduct toward holiness so that we will be conformed to the Father's and the Son's image, not the world's which is produced by lust.

Turn now to I Corinthians 9 for step 2. These are very well-known scriptures to every one of us.

**I Corinthians 9:24** Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

Can you begin to see the second step here? First we have to gird our minds to point them in a specific direction, constantly prepared to go in that direction. We have got to discipline ourselves, and we have to go like crazy (as Paul might be saying here) to make sure that we make the effort to go in that direction. Now Paul is talking about himself.

**I Corinthians 9:25-27** And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate [is self-controlled] in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore [Paul says] I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

We have to prepare our minds to go in a certain direction toward holiness, then we have to bend our efforts and our will toward going in that direction. But now we need a couple of specifics added to this so that we know more specifically what it is we are to do, and we will begin with Jesus' comment to His disciples on the last evening of His life.

**John 14:15** "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

There is a specific direction. We will make it even more magnified by going back to I John 2. Remember, John was there that very night Jesus said that.

**I John 2:3-6** Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

That gives more specific direction to the first two. We will go to one more.

**I John 5:2-3** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

So often when we see those verses in I John 5, and we see the word "commandments," we think of the Ten Commandments, and indeed we should. There is nothing wrong with that. It does not stop there. This book is *filled* with God's commandments. That is the way we are to look at what God said. "This is a commandment from My Father, that I do this, even though it is not specifically included in the Ten." For instance, we are to love our enemies. That is hard to do. That is a commandment from our God.

We are going to add one more verse. It will be like Point 3A. We are going to go to Ephesians 4. I do this because it gives us a more specific point to a goal.

**Ephesians 4:13** Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

In effect, what he was saying there is that we have to grow until we are in the image of Jesus Christ, and that is a lot of growing.

We are going to take a look at the development of government as shown in the Bible. We are going to flip all the way to the beginning of the Book, to Genesis the first chapter, and here is where the first intimation of government comes in.

**Genesis 1:26** Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

The word "dominion" implies having sovereignty, control, and rulership over, and therefore government over, and care of what one has dominion over. This is quite broad, but it is a beginning. It is a broad foundation for other things that will come along a little bit later.

Laws create and maintain order *within* the dominion given. These came into the picture whenever God gave the law to Adam and Eve, stating that they could eat the fruit from all of the trees in the Garden with the exception of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. I am sure that implies there were other things involved in what God said, but here is a summary of the two most important points. In other words, laws and government go together, and here is where specific government began in terms of specific law.

When God created Eve, we see the beginning of *family* government added to our individual responsibility to Him. God is the Creator. He is also the Creator of marriage, and as Creator it is He who gives the laws governing relationships within that union. What I just said has to be considered first by both parties in the marriage; that is, we have to look to God and what He says about it first, and follow what He says if we are going to be in submission to Him. We will just take one principle here to establish what our Savior inspired the apostle Paul to write just in case there were any questions in the Corinthian church.

**I Corinthians 11:2-3** Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

From this we can learn a broad principle, that man, by divine appointment, is head of family government. The man is not superior by creation than the woman. The appointment is by God, and each is personally responsible to Him to govern himself following God's commands scattered throughout the Bible. That does give a definite order so that we can understand.

Now we are going to go back to Genesis again.

**Genesis 4:13-15** And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me." [Does that not imply some sort of government? Somebody is going to execute vengeance against Cain.] And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." [God will intervene.] And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

The conclusion I am going to reach here is one that is implied, and I know it is a correct implication, and that is there is no other government preceding this other than the government of the family. Therefore, what Cain was afraid of was that one of his brothers would kill him and take vengeance on him for the family's sake.

Now the same thing happens five or six verses later with Lamech—one of the other great killers of that time. Again, Lamech's comment was similar to Cain's. He was not afraid of any government other than the family coming down on him. There is no mention of a bearer of a sword from a civil government. But government continues to be developed.

We are now going to go to Genesis 9. The Flood is over, and Noah and his progeny are outside of the ark. How long this has been since the Flood ended, I do not know, but notice what God says because it is significant in terms of the formation of governments on earth.

**Genesis 9:5-6** Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.

This is a first implication that we have of government that is going to expand outside the immediate family. So following the Flood, as God began re-establishing man's dominion over the earth through Noah and his progeny, we see the first intimation of civil authority appearing, and it is interesting that the first consideration is given for the protection of innocent life and the punishment of the guilty.

As each form of government arises—family, civil, and church—we also gradually find that each is given privileges and duty. Notice that the privilege there was to take the life of somebody who was a murderer. Now here is a simple and clear way that God designates the authority He has given to the various parts of government.

We are now going to go to Proverbs 23. Here is what the family has been given to them by God.

**Proverbs 23:13-14** Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod; and deliver his soul from hell [the grave].

The family unit, in order to inflict punishment, is given the rod: a spanking.

**Romans 13:4** For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

The civil government is given the sword: the death penalty.

What about the church? What is the church given by God to execute punishment? We are going to find that—at least the foundation of it—in Matthew 16. Jesus Christ was speaking to the apostles. You will be able to see that judgment is involved here.

**Matthew 16:19** And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

The word "keys" is the key word here. It is being used to represent the Word of God. He is saying, "I will give to you the Word of God." Another way of putting that is, "I will give you the way of salvation so you can teach it."

Now how are people in the church punished? We will not go to every scripture, but the church has been given the power to disfellowship people, thus denying the person to hearing of the word of life, and brethren, it is just like a death penalty. This is serious business because the source of truth on earth is the church, and if a person is cut off from the source, well, it is up to them to do what they need to do, and according to God, that is to repent and get themselves back in there, to change their mind, to change their attitude, to change their heart, or whatever. One scripture that will really be helpful for that is John 6:63.

**John 6:63** It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

We need the Word of God for eternal life, and without having access to that, we are cut off from it.

Let us go back to the book of Genesis again. We left off in Genesis 9:6. We are now going to read verse 7 just as a little bit of a preamble for what is to follow. Now listen to this command. They just came out of the ark, and God said:

**Genesis 9:7** And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it."

This charge goes back in thought from the time following the Flood all the way back to Genesis 1:28 where God told them to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The implication, coming out of the ark, is that they are to disperse and spread over the face of the earth. Now what does man do instead?

**Genesis 11:1-3** Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar.

It does not sound like they are spreading. It sounds like they are congregating. Is that not true? Absolutely. They are disobeying God's government.

**Genesis 11:4** And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

Mankind instead rejected dispersion and the responsibility therefore of being self-governing instruments under the hand of God. Instead, they gathered in the Tigris-Euphrates river valley, creating a city and a centralized government under the despot Nimrod.

I think the most significant thing I said here is that they rejected governing themselves under God. They wanted a power to be over them, and more or less *force* them to obey. This I find to be an eerie foreshadowing of what happened with Israel under Samuel. I want you to notice a very significant verse in the book of Judges.

**Judges 21:25** In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Yes, there was a king, but no *human* king. The king was God, and the people were responsible to submit themselves under God, but they looked no further than the fact that they had no king, that there was no human standard they were going to be responsible for living up to, and so everybody simply did what they good and well felt like doing, and that gave rise to what we see in I Samuel 8. I know that you are familiar with this, but I want you to see this in sequence as to how this thing came about. Israel was doing essentially the same thing they did in Babylon.

**I Samuel 8:7** And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, . . .

I told you in my comment on Judges 21:25 that yes, there *was* a king there, and that king was God. They rejected Him. They did what was right in their own eyes. They did not govern themselves, and now we come to this:

**I Samuel 8:7** . . . that *I* should not reign over them.

So God gave Samuel a pretty long description of what He foresaw would take place in the future, and we will read verses 19 and 20.

**I Samuel 8:19-20** Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

Israel, prior to this time, had a rather loose governmental structure under judges, but it had a very heavy emphasis on self-government. God was their King, but they chose not to govern themselves. You can begin to see already that God's governmental structure indicates a large measure of individual responsibility, combined with a personal relationship with Him. That is very important.

God's governmental structure indicates a large measure of individual responsibility, combined with a personal relationship with Him, and that is shown by what God said. "They rejected Me." There was no relationship there, and there was no relationship because they would not submit. They would not govern themselves. "Can two walk together unless they agree?" Those people could not walk with God because they did not agree with Him. They did not want to govern themselves, and so there was no relationship, and the whole structure broke down. That is why God said, "Give them what they want and let them learn the hard way."

In doing what they did here in I Samuel 8, they actually gave up an awful lot of their liberties to a king. That is essentially what is happening today in the United States of America. The American people are giving up their liberty to a king—a government. They do not call it a king, but they are giving up their liberty to the government.

It is interesting that people under Nimrod thought they were creating an everlasting empire that could defeat any device, any plan God could come up with. It is very interesting to follow what is happening in the news because there are parallels that we are living through day after day in what is happening here in these United States of America.

One of the most significant things that occurred in our history, and occurred before any of us here within the sound of my voice was born. It occurred in around 1912 when the president of the United States, with the acceptance of Congress, turned the making of our money over to a private institution—the Federal Reserve Bank—giving them the power over the government. It was very interesting. Money is a very powerful instrument.

There are historians who say the very reason Abraham Lincoln was assassinated was because he refused to turn it over to a private institution, and he got killed for his effort. That is a possibility. I do not know, but they did succeed in 1912, and brethren, things have started downhill ever since, because it was in effect turning the power of government over to these people. It did not happen right away, but gradually, step by step, it began to occur.

I want you to see a very interesting series of verses in the book of Habakkuk. We do not turn very often to Habakkuk, but I want you to see what Habakkuk says in the very first chapter, because I think you could put very many church members in the same position as Habakkuk looked at what was happening to Israel in *his* lifetime. Listen to this plea. Listen to this complaint.

**Habakkuk 1:1-4** The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw. O LORD, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? [Do we say things like this? "God, what in the world is happening to our country?"] Even cry out to You, "Violence!" ["Look at what is going on, God, in the streets."] And You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; there is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds.

Six thousand years ago Satan said to Eve, "Has God said . . .?" and I believe he asked that in a mocking, scornful, cynical, distrustful, skeptical, and contentious way. I believe, based on what has happened over the past 100 years or so, Satan is asking many Americans in high places—people who have influence in government and the courts and who hate the moral law of God and refuse to be governed by it—that same question.

What has happened, even in the last 30 or 40 years, is that our Justice Department sweeps aside the things of God as though they have no affect on our individual or on our national attitudes and morals. Instead of seeking the favor of the Lord God through obedience, they are doing all they can to seek deliverance *from* Him and His law through endless legislation—(Oh, we are making laws left and right!)—and promise of governments of men to deliver them through the administration.

The word "salvation" means "deliverance." Have you ever noticed that everything the government does for us now is for our good? It makes you want to question, "Whose good, really?"

The church that we came out of had, I would call it, a heavy-handed government. I do not mean it was really mean. I do not mean that at all, but it was authoritative, and very often the ministry of that group was called "the government of God." We are going to examine this for a few minutes. Was it really the government of God?

Let us go back to God's Word in the book of Isaiah. Everyone will recognize this is a prophecy of Christ.

**Isaiah 9:6-7** For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. [Once He comes and is installed in that office, there will be no end.] Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice, from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

We are going to go back to the resurrection chapter and see something the apostle Paul said there that magnifies this a bit. I am just going to read the essentials to understand about the government of God.

**I Corinthians 15:23-26** But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

The reason I wanted verse 26 in there is that the government is going to be on *His* shoulder, and it is unending. His authority is unending until He voluntarily gives it up when all other enemies have been subdued.

Again, remember Isaiah 9:7. The Kingdom of God is His Kingdom, and Paul confirmed that He is ruler until He voluntarily returns it to the Father, and as King of the Kingdom, as Head of the Church who directs all parts of the Body, and High Priest of the church, His authority carries right on through each one of us individually. The government is *His* responsibility. All of us answer to Him. It is our

responsibility to govern ourselves directly under His rule and authority, just like it was in Israel before they pushed God out of the way.

You will find the term "governments" in I Corinthians 12:28. I just want you to note this that the word translated "governments" in the *KJV* is *kubernetes*. You will remember that *kuberna* is the word from which we get the Greek word from which we get the term "government." *Kubernetes* is plural of that, and in the *NKJV* they have a more proper translation—"administrations." In this context then, administration means "those who give guidance." It is not necessarily a minister at all. It could just be simply "wise people."

We are going to go back to the Romans 13 once again. We are still chasing this thing about the government of God. We have already established that Christ is the Head of that government. He has not relinquished it one second since it became His by appointment of God.

**Romans 13:1** Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

**Romans 13:4** For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

**Romans 13:7** Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

All governing authority, whether personal, civil, or church flows from the Father, and is a responsibility given, and all are answerable to Him. Paul said something significant in regard to this.

**Romans 14:10-12** . . . For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

I want you to know that, because even these people in the world are being judged by God, and ultimately they are going to have to give Him an accounting, because He appointed them. They rule at His discretion. It is His creation. He sets them up. He takes them down, and they have to answer to Him. Whether they know that thoroughly or not, they are going to have to answer to Him, and this even includes those evil benefactors Christ spoke of in Luke 22:25 who were given authority by God, and then proceeded to take more than originally given through whatever methods they employed to get greater control for the accomplishment of their end.

Let us make a summary statement here. These verses are telling me that the governments of the United States, Britain, Canada, Germany, France, Iraq, Japan, China, whatever, all receive their authority from the God we worship. Now a question. Do we consider them as governments of God? We called the government in the church the government of God, but what governing authorities we had in the church got their authority from exactly the same place as the governments of men: from God. We do not call them "the government of God," so why should we call the government in the church "the government of God"? We should not. It is a government *of* men given authority *from* God and acting as His agent.

Romans 13:7 includes the government in the church, and the intent of that verse is that we give governments respect because they are appointed by God. And so the taxes, customs, fear, and honor are all something the governed are expected to voluntarily govern themselves in, in order to give to those in authority. That is us. I do not mean we are in authority. Out of respect to God, we have to give them what God says we should do, and that is respect them, pay the taxes, etc., etc.

God nowhere instructs those in authority to control people to the extent of taking things from people for their own personal benefit. History shows that a controlling administration of government never works. It will work for a while. It will solve some problems for a while, but history shows that this approach has an unbroken track record of always ending in a violent rebellion in this world.

Just remember the admonition. You know this saying very well. "He that is convinced against his will remains unconvinced still." That is a true aphorism. Do you know what it is that proves to me this aphorism is true? It is the way God governs. If government really worked through force, God would govern that way. God governs through primarily persuasion, truth. Give people the facts and the space for them to make up their own mind.

Now because He does it that way, His teaching, His presentation of truth, is *very* thorough. It is not vague, even to the place, brethren, where you know this is true, He gives His children His Spirit so that they know that it is true, and they can then relate to it in a way that the people in the world cannot. But He still uses the same basic method of giving us truth. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," if you continue in His will and in His way, as Jesus said.

I do not know how the WCG came to be a controlling institution, but I think the attitude spread from church administration to the ministerial aspects of it, ministerial conduct and attitude, and then on to the congregation through sermons on government, marriage, childrearing, business practices, and so forth. I really believe that it was a well-intended, paternalistic approach—even approaching partly in some places militaristic in some locations, because some in the ministry were rigidly overbearing in manner, and thus a controlling attitude underlaid many relationships *within* the brotherhood.

Now Webster's defines "paternalistic" as "a system under which an authority [the ministry] undertakes to supply needs or regulate conduct of those under its control in matters affecting them as individuals as well as their relations to authority and each other."

What that is saying, in effect, is like a parent-child relationship where the parent has all the power and all the authority, and not only teaches, but *makes* the kid do it that way. That is not entirely wrong. It is not really a terribly evil situation at all, but it has its weaknesses. This is not a new concept to religion. It is as old as the Catholic Church, and the Vatican is actually a paternalistic, political, religious state with fuzzy religious overtones. The pope is the Vicar of Christ. Do you know what that means? It means that he is a substitute who rules in the place of Christ.

We just saw from the apostle Paul that Christ is not going to give up His rule over the church until He voluntarily turns it over to the Father after death has been conquered. People are still dying. Christ has not given up His position whatever. They are operating on a lie here. The cardinals are actually political figures, carrying political titles in religious trappings. Christ indeed went off to heaven, but in no way, even for one second, was His authority over church either relinquished or taken from Him.

So church government derives its authority from God just like all the civil governments on earth. Church government is no more the government of God than those civil governments. God's government is in the hand of Jesus Christ, and church members must believe that, and by faith live it. Do not follow the way of the ancient Israelites. He is still in heaven. He is alive. He is guiding His church. He is leading His church. He is our High Priest. We have to answer to Him. But like all social institutions, the church has its needs, and human government, for the purpose of order and direction, is also necessary.

Let us go to I Corinthians 14:26 and see it in operation under the apostle Paul.

**I Corinthians 14:26** How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

The very fact that he has to say that tells you that things were not being done for everyone's edification. In fact, I get the picture here that it was almost chaotic, with everybody fighting for the opportunity to get up and say what he had to say.

**I Corinthians 14:29** Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.

He did not mean for them to all speak at once. He means one after the other if it is going to be done in order.

**I Corinthians 14:31-32** For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. [They have to control themselves.]

These were not prophets in the sense of somebody foretelling the future. These were people who thought that they were speaking under the Spirit of God, and that is all a "prophet" means—one who is speaking by the Spirit, or under spirit. It might have been a lesson on correction. Who knows?

**I Corinthians 14:33, 40** For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. . . . Let all things be done decently and in order.

God is a God of order. He is not a God of confusion. This is what government is for. It puts things in order so that things are done in a way that it is edifying, up building, and helpful to all concerned, and there is no chaos.

Just taking by what Paul says here in I Corinthians 14, the correction of God's government absolutely depends on each person possessing God's truth, and by faith governing himself, and never to go beyond the authority God has given him. This is very important.

I want you to turn to that section where Paul says he beat himself and brought himself under subjection. I want you to see a statement he made just before he makes that statement about how he took care of keeping himself under control.

**I Corinthians 9:18** What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.

He kept himself under control at all times, and this is what Jesus did. Jesus executed God's will flawlessly, and He says in John 8:29, "I always do what pleases My Father." Always. Jesus was no rabble-rouser, authority-taking person. In fact, it even prophesies, "You will not hear His voice crying in the streets."

Now back to our Constitution as we begin to wrap this up, because it plays on what I am talking about here. Although it is unstated within its pages, this nation's Constitution, though imperfect, grants more wonderful liberties to its citizens than any other nation that has ever existed on earth, unless it was Israel under God, but it is all based on the premise of a self-governing citizenry. That is why John Adams, especially, but also George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, who was probably the Constitution's main framer, all made statements tacking on the necessity of an American citizen being God-fearing and self-governing.

**Deuteronomy 28:15** "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.

Brethren, it is happening to this nation. To the best of my knowledge, not one of the Constitution's framers was what we would consider a real Christian. They certainly understood, though, very, very many biblical principles, and they clearly understood that this Constitution was, in a sense, a gamble. That is why they all made the statements they did about people being God-fearing and religious. They knew that it was a gamble, because without self-government by individual citizens, this republican form of government would easily descend into anarchy, and that is where it is headed now.

Because of God's grace and a fairly strong religious foundation and many true Christian principles, America did pretty well for a good while, but in our time this nation is rapidly moving away from these very necessary twin principles—good Constitution combined with a religious citizenry—toward a largely godless citizenry which mistakenly thinks they know God without really being involved with Him, and so the government is moving toward socialism.

Socialism creates a nanny-state environment in which the state government is looked upon as mankind's provider. Brethren, the state is becoming "God," and the lesson of history is that we are moving toward a dictatorship in which people will pretty much voluntarily give themselves over in a desperate drive for safety and security. Do you understand that this is what exactly happened in Rome? Caesar—the head of government—became god! We may never reach that degenerate state, but that is the direction we are headed.

As I close off, I want to give this comment: This time the dictatorship will ultimately culminate in the biblically prophesied Beast—a global government having tremendously magnified power. So what we have to do is to hold on to our relationship with God, because that is where salvation is, and has always been. The government cannot give it.