The Timeless Voice: Why government needs the Church

Commentary by Greg Baker

Throughout history, and throughout the Scriptures, the unique relationship between the shepherds of God's institutions — government and the Church — has been vital to society's success. In fact, the government needs the Church to fulfill its biblical role. For the Church represents a voice not swayed by cultural trends, but rather standing for the timeless truths of the Scriptures, no matter how the culture tugs on government.

One of Scripture's most revealing examples is the relationship between King David and the prophet of the Lord, Nathan. King David is remembered as one of Israel's best kings, described as a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). In fact, it is through the lineage of David that Christ now reigns.

David's reign, however, was far from perfect.

King David suffered several dark periods, including a time when he committed adultery and murder. When other kings led their nations into war, willing to fight and even die for their people (as David had done in his younger days), David decided to stay at home and let others die for him. He esteemed his life and time more important than the people he was supposed to be serving. And while his men were at war without him, David saw the lovely Bathsheba and took her as his own. When her husband (one of David's soldiers at war) got in his way, David had him killed. David's reign had become not only selfish, but tyrannical.

Then the prophet Nathan enters the stage. The shepherd of the Lord, risking his life, stepped into David's palace and corrected the king. As the timeless voice, he called King

David out for doing wrong.

But what if Nathan had never approached David? What would have happened? Perhaps we would not be reading David's Psalms today. The books of Samuel, chronicling David's life, would look very different. The lineage of Christ may have even looked different. But thank God for Nathan. Thank God the timeless voice did its job.

Nathan and David, however, are not a unique outlier. Again and again the timeless voice rose to speak to the kings of old. Joseph and Moses stood before the pharaohs of their day. The prophet Daniel interacted in the lives of four different emperors. Even in the New Testament, John the Baptist stood before King Herod and Paul before Caesar himself.

Contrary to what many would like to believe, government is not an institution of this world. It is an institution of God's, with the purpose to punish evil and reward good (1 Peter 2). Those who serve in it are called the Lord's ministers (Romans 13). It is God's institution of justice, and when government does its job well, it is a blessing to its people.

Yet government cannot be a blessing to its people, cannot be an institution of justice, rightly parsing right from wrong, if it's left unanchored to sway with every current of culture or popular opinion. It needs the counsel of the Church, the timeless voice.

Throughout the Scriptures, kings wise enough to listen to the timeless voice prospered. Those that didn't, didn't. Egypt's pharaoh during the times of Joseph listened, and Egypt was blessed. But the pharaoh of Moses's day did not listen, and the great Egyptian empire was brought to its knees.

God established our social institutions, government among them, but the Church is perhaps the most unique. With Jesus Christ as its head, the Church is the only source of absolute truth in an ever-changing world. That is why God designed

government and the church to work together. Government needs the counsel of the Church to determine good from evil. Without the Church, government has to find answers from the world, and apart from the truth, many ways seem right to a person, but in the end they lead to death (Proverbs 14:12).

As the Church, therefore, we must engage the government by being the timeless voice of truth God has called us to be. Our government and nation, as well as all nations of the world, depend on it.

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