

Concerned Women For America

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Part 1

Earlier in the broadcast we interviewed Patricia Thompson, the Central California Area Director of Concerned Women for America. She talked about their mission statement, which is published on their website, CWFA.org. In case you have just turned on your car radio and missed the beginning of the broadcast, here is their mission statement again:

The mission of Concerned Women for America (CWA) is to protect and promote Biblical values among all citizens – first through prayer, then education, and finally by influencing our society – thereby reversing the decline in moral values in our nation. We focus on six core issues: the sanctity of life, religious freedom, definition of the family, pornography, education, and national sovereignty.

Of course, there is no question among Christians that we should pray for our leaders. Clearly it is a good idea to educate ourselves, and others, about moral issues. It is the third part, about “influencing our society,” through political lobbying where good Christians might have some reservations.

In its pure form, lobbying is a good thing. Lawmakers are often called upon to pass laws with far-reaching implications that they simply don’t understand. It is important for lobbyists to review legislation and advise lawmakers about the potential benefits, adverse results, and unintended consequences of passing that legislation as it relates to the particular segments of society they represent. Lobbying, in its pure form, is an essential part of the democratic process of government. It educates lawmakers about all aspects of impending legislation so that they can make the best choices.

Unfortunately, lobbying is highly vulnerable to corruption. Unscrupulous lobbyists promise campaign support for politicians who support legislation that unfairly benefits their special interests. This leads to a generally unfavorable view of lobbyists in the public’s eyes.

Concerned Women for America reviews legislation from a Christian perspective and encourages lawmakers to pass laws compatible with Christian values, and reject laws that are not.

The second of their six core issues is religious freedom. There is a delicate balance between “promoting Biblical values” and preserving religious freedom. That’s why good Christians may honestly disagree about the role of Christians in government.

It has been said, “You can’t legislate morality;” but there are laws against theft and murder. So, America does legislate conformance to two of the Ten Commandments, but not the other eight. We do legislate some kinds morality in some cases. Where do we draw the line?

As always, we want to evaluate the issue from a Biblical perspective. Unfortunately, the Bible doesn’t say anything specifically about campaigning or running for political office because the culture in which it was written was not a democracy. So, we have to extrapolate practical, specific applications from general principles, and pray that we do it correctly.

Paul talks about the relationship between Christians and the government in the first seven verses of chapter 13 of his letter to the Romans.

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

This is in complete agreement with what Jesus said in Matthew 22, verses 15 through 22.

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

These two passages have to do with obeying civil laws, not creating them; but the pertinent point in both is, "The authorities that exist have been established by God." Jesus reminded Pilate of this fact in his final interview, recorded in John 19, verses 10 and 11.

"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."

This leads us into difficult territory, bordering on predestination. If God gives leaders their divine right to rule, who are we to influence them?

God clearly is in control of selecting leaders. If you are familiar with the most popular Old Testament stories you know that He personally selected Moses, Samuel, Saul, David, and others. If you aren't familiar with these stories, consider Daniel 4:17,

“ ‘The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.’ “

and Daniel 5:21,

[King Nebuchadnezzar] was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes.

One might ask, “If God sets up anyone He wishes, why should I bother to vote? Why should I campaign for anyone?”

If these verses were all we had to go on, we would come to the conclusion that we should just let God pick our leaders and obey everything they tell us to do. But, this isn't all we have to go on, which makes the situation a little more difficult. So, let's take a break and listen to some music, and then consider what else the Bible has to say on the subject.

[Sound the Battle Cry]

Part 2

In the previous section, we heard some Bible passages telling us in no uncertain terms that “God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone He wishes,” and “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.” But there must be more to the story because angels not only told Peter to defy the authorities; they helped him get out of prison to do it.

The story is told in Acts, chapter 5. Let's listen to this commentary on that passage in these excerpts from Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 8, “Before the Sanhedrin” by Ellen White.

The disciples were but humble men, without wealth, and with no weapon but the word of God; yet in Christ's strength they went forth to tell the wonderful story of the manger and the cross, and to triumph over all opposition. Without earthly honor or recognition, they were heroes of faith. From their lips came words of divine eloquence that shook the world.

The priests and rulers saw that Christ was extolled above them. As the Sadducees, who did not believe in a resurrection, heard the apostles declaring that Christ had risen from the dead, they were enraged, realizing that if the apostles were allowed to preach a risen Saviour, and to work miracles in His name, the doctrine that there would be no resurrection would be rejected by all, and the sect of the Sadducees would soon become extinct. The Pharisees were angry as they perceived that the tendency of the disciples' teaching was to undermine the Jewish ceremonies, and make the sacrificial offerings of no effect.

Hitherto all the efforts made to suppress this new teaching had been in vain; but now both Sadducees and Pharisees determined that the work of the disciples should be stopped, for it was proving them guilty of the death of Jesus. Filled with indignation, the priests laid violent hands on Peter and John, and put them in the common prison.

In their blindness these leaders now gave full sway to what they called righteous indignation against the ones who were setting aside their cherished doctrines. They would not admit even

the possibility that they themselves did not rightly understand the word, or that they had misinterpreted or misapplied the Scriptures. They acted like men who had lost their reason. What right have these teachers, they said, some of them mere fishermen, to present ideas contrary to the doctrines that we have taught the people? Being determined to suppress the teaching of these ideas, they imprisoned those who were presenting them.

The disciples were not intimidated or cast down by this treatment. The Holy Spirit brought to their minds the words spoken by Christ: "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me." "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." "These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them." John 15:20, 21; 16:2, 4.

The God of heaven, the mighty Ruler of the universe, took the matter of the imprisonment of the disciples into His own hands, for men were warring against His work. By night the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and said to the disciples, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." This command was directly contrary to the order given by the Jewish rulers; but did the apostles say, We cannot do this until we have consulted the magistrates and received permission from them? No; God had said, "Go," and they obeyed. "They entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught."

When Peter and John appeared among the believers and recounted how the angel had led them directly through the band of soldiers guarding the prison, bidding them resume the work that had been interrupted, the brethren were filled with amazement and joy.

In the meantime the high priest and those with him had "called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel."

When they sent for the prisoners to be brought before them, great was their amazement at the word brought back that the prison doors were found to be securely bolted and the guard stationed before them, but that the prisoners were nowhere to be found.

Soon the astonishing report came, "Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned."

Although the apostles were miraculously delivered from prison, they were not safe from examination and punishment. Christ had said when He was with them, "Take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils." Mark 13:9. By sending an angel to deliver them, God had given them a token of His love and an assurance of His presence. It was now their part to suffer for the sake of the One whose gospel they were preaching.

In the history of prophets and apostles, are many noble examples of loyalty to God. Christ's witnesses have endured imprisonment, torture, and death itself, rather than break God's commands. The record left by Peter and John is as heroic as any in the gospel dispensation. As they stood for the second time before the men who seemed bent on their destruction, no fear or hesitation could be discerned in their words or attitude. And when the high priest said, "Did we not straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood upon us," Peter answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men." It was an angel from heaven who delivered them from prison and bade them teach in the temple. In following his directions they were obeying the divine command, and this they must continue to do at whatever cost to themselves.

Then the Spirit of Inspiration came upon the disciples; the accused became the accusers, charging the murder of Christ upon those who composed the council. "The God of our fathers

raised up Jesus," Peter declared, "whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

So enraged were the Jews at these words that they decided to take the law into their own hands and without further trial, or without authority from the Roman officers, to put the prisoners to death. Already guilty of the blood of Christ, they were no eager to stain their hands with the blood of His disciples.

But in the council there was one man who recognized the voice of God in the words spoken by the disciples. This was Gamaliel, a Pharisee of good reputation and a man of learning and high position. His clear intellect saw that the violent step contemplated by the priests would lead to terrible consequences.

He then spoke with great deliberation and calmness, saying: "Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. ... Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

The priests saw the reasonableness of these views, and were obliged to agree with Gamaliel. Yet their prejudice and hatred could hardly be restrained. Very reluctantly, after beating the disciples and charging them again at the peril of their lives to preach no more in the name of Jesus, they released them. "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

Shortly before His crucifixion Christ had bequeathed to His disciples a legacy of peace. "Peace I leave with you," He said, "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14:27. This peace is not the peace that comes through conformity to the world. Christ never purchased peace by compromise with evil. The peace that Christ left His disciples is internal rather than external and was ever to remain with His witnesses through strife and contention.

Christ said of Himself, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Matthew 10:34. The Prince of Peace, He was yet the cause of division. He who came to proclaim glad tidings and to create hope and joy in the hearts of the children of men, opened a controversy that burns deep and arouses intense passion in the human heart. And He warns His followers, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake." "Ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death." John 16:33; Luke 21:12, 16.

This prophecy has been fulfilled in a marked manner. Every indignity, reproach, and cruelty that Satan could instigate human hearts to devise, has been visited upon the followers of Jesus. And it will be again fulfilled in a marked manner; for the carnal heart is still at enmity with the law of God, and will not be subject to its commands. The world is no more in harmony with the principles of Christ today than it was in the days of the apostles. The same hatred that prompted the cry, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" the same hatred that led to the persecution of the disciples, still works in the children of disobedience. The same spirit which in the Dark Ages consigned men and women to prison, to exile, and to death, which conceived the exquisite torture of the Inquisition, which planned and executed the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, and which kindled the fires of Smithfield, is still at work with malignant energy in unregenerate hearts. The history of truth has ever been the record of a struggle between right and wrong. The proclamation of the

gospel has ever been carried forward in this world in the face of opposition, peril, loss, and suffering.¹

So, although God gives rulers their positions, they don't always act in accordance with his wishes. King Saul, and most of the other kings of Israel and Judah, could be cited as examples. When their laws conflict with God's laws, we must obey God rather than man.

God does set up rulers; but the way He does it depends upon the culture. In Old Testament times He did it by having a prophet anoint the next king. He doesn't do it that way in our culture. In our culture He uses the democratic process. He sends the Holy Spirit to convict people to vote one way or the other. Of course, people have the ability to ignore the Holy Spirit to their own detriment.

Peter's preaching against the Jewish rulers comes as close to political lobbying as was possible in that culture. So, it certainly seems to me that Christians are perfectly within their rights to express their opinions on political issues to their elected representatives, especially when those issues deal with morality.

In particular, the new California law, SB 48 which Patricia mentioned, requiring homosexual history to be taught favorably in public, charter, and private schools, is an excellent example. It is an attack on Christian values, and violates religious freedom. It should be overturned.

In a previous broadcast, Larry Josephson talked about his experience teaching English, using the Bible as a textbook, in Russian public schools. During that interview he made the point that, during the years of communist rule, the government tolerated the Russian Orthodox Church, as long as they didn't preach the word. As long as the church just sang songs and praised God, the government didn't bother them.

That's not the kind of church Jesus established. The apostles spoke out against human authorities when they were not in harmony with God's laws. The apostles were willing to suffer imprisonment and martyrdom for God's word.

Christian churches have a choice to make. Are they going to be like the Russian Orthodox Church in the days of communist rule, content to sing songs and praise God while the government not only permits, but promotes, moral decline? Or, are they going to be like the apostolic church and stand for morality?

¹ <http://www.whiteestate.org/books/aa/aa8.html>