

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS

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Introduction

The good news of the Lord Jesus Christ invites people everywhere to come into the Kingdom of God. This kingdom is the epitome of all political systems. It is a Kingdom in which righteousness, joy and peace reigns supreme (Rom. 14.17). Needless to say it is a kingdom of tremendous power to change from bad to good, better to best. No wonder as the gospel has gone to every nation on earth it has transformed the relationships between the ruler and the ruled as well as the quality of rules that mediate the relationships between the two. This is what is today referred to as good governance. The gospel has also transformed many despotic and autocratic kingdoms (one man rule) into democracies (rule by the people) where human –political and civil rights-are upheld. The countries of the world can be classified by those that have had an impact of the good news on their political systems and the ones that have not.

1. Scriptural Teaching on the Kingdom of God and Earthly Political systems

The Bible teaches that God was the One that apportioned times, seasons and location to all nations on earth. The reason He did this is that all nations should seek Him (Acts 17: 26-27). In Romans 13. 1-7, the Apostle Paul speaks to the responsibilities of the church to building and sustaining good governance and this is what we shall focus briefly in this paper.

The Key Principles laid out in these verses are as follows:

1. The church and its membership are commanded to be subject to all authorities—ecclesiastical as well as secular. These include authorities at home, in our work place, churches and societies and at national and subnational levels of the political system.
2. Three reasons why the church of God and its members must be subject are provided:
 - All powers and authority come from God. (v. 1, Ps. 62.11, Mt. 28.18)
 - Rulers are ministers of God to promote good governance (v. 3, 2 Sam.23.3-4).
 - Anyone who resists rulers is resisting God who ordains the leaders in office (v.2)

2. The Role of the Church in Building and Sustaining Good Governance

Some have argued that the Apostle Paul assumed that all rulers would fulfill their God-given assignments to promote justice, fairness and welfare of their people—the key elements of good governance (2 Samuel 23.3).

The question is then posed what happens when some (political) leaders refuse to see themselves as God's servants and pursue not good governance of their own people but seek their own interest to the exclusion of the society? What must the church of God and its members do in these circumstances?

The scriptures provide an answer. The church must do six things irrespective of the nature of the rulers (regime) in the political system. At the end of the day, all political leaders are subject to the authority of God. He has His expectations of them and He knows exactly what to do when any political leader works contrary to His expectations. There are lots of examples in the Bible (Dan.4. 30-37; Acts 12:1-4,23).

1. **PRAYER:** God enjoins us to treat prayer for political leaders as one of high priority for three main reasons. One, to ensure that they rule with wisdom and not folly. We all know what happened to Rehoboam who inherited a united and powerful kingdom from his father but lost it due to bad counsel (1 Kings 12.1-17). A leader is responsible for the advice he receives for two reasons—he is the one who appointed the advisers and also he alone can decide what to do with the advice he/she receives.

Second reason we must pray for leaders is that even having wisdom is not sufficient as satanic forces can destroy wise kings—including the wisest of them all—when they are careless (e.g. David and Solomon—2 Sam 11.1-5, 24.1, 1 Kings 11.1-10). The reason this happens is that the devil works to possess the political systems and ensure that their leaderships work contrary to the Lord. This is the sense in which we speak of territorial principalities such as the prince of Persia (see Daniel 10:12-13)

Finally, the church must be ready to contest unjust actions by governments of the day on its knees. It further helps if the church can pray with one voice and continuously as the Lord has promised to hearken when we pray. (Contrast the response of the church to the arrest of James and Peter in Acts 12: 1-5)—and the differential effects.

2. **PARTICIPATE IN APPROPRIATE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES:** In every political system, citizens are crucial to the failure or success of that system. This is particularly the case in (young) democracies. Citizens are expected to vote at elections, they are expected to provide suggestions to their political leaders at local, state and national levels on how to bring about good governance. In democracies they can also contest elections at national and sub-national levels.

Unfortunately, many Christians do not like to participate at all in politics, believing that politics is dirty and is for crooks with a lot of money and capacity to hire thugs to fight for them to secure victory. In some cases people even fear for their lives—they think their opponents would kill them. In many young democracies, there is no good understanding of the idea of opposition only of enemies and friends. Enemies are to be eliminated whereas opposition is desired because they provide alternative policies and approaches to securing good governance.

The problem when Christians run from participating in the politics of their nation, state or local community is that bad governance reigns supreme...as crooks fill positions of governance. We all saw the changes that some traditional rulers have brought into their communities because they are Christians...they have brought an end to fetish and idol worship successfully with great prosperity for their kingdoms.

3. **PAY TAXES AND DUES:** All political kingdoms must be well financed. Taxes provide the means of their financing. Unfortunately, many people never pay their taxes but want the government to maintain good services—roads, electricity, schools, and health clinics, clean environment. This can only happen when the governments have access to good financial resources to service these infrastructures. It is these infrastructures—the services that would not be provided by private entrepreneurs because the benefit to society is greater than to individuals –that are the preconditions for economic development and prosperity of any nation.

However, these public funds can be easily mismanaged or misappropriated. This is why the church must speak out and provide leadership in managing God-given resources. There are standard principles for ensuring that public and societal resources are managed well. These principles are enshrined in the scriptures as well (e.g. 2 Cor. 8.19-22)

4. **PROVIDE CIVIC EDUCATION:** The church must provide civic education to its members but also to rulers and the ruled alike on the key principles of good governance as taught in the scriptures.
5. **PARTNER WITH GOVERNMENTS TO ENSURE GOOD GOVERNANCE**
There are several areas in which the church can partner with government to deliver high quality services for the public—good roads, water supply into villages and even electricity, schools, clinics and agricultural extension, rural banking etc. These are areas in which RCCG and especially its African missions wing have involvement and heavy investment.

The church can also come up with good ideas in the realm of public policy which would be provided on a non-partisan basis. Many developed countries seek the advice and wisdom of churches and other non-governmental organizations in different areas of social and economic policy and these should be commended and further enhanced by all sides. In all these confidentiality, candor, expertise and knowledge are critical. It is a reason why churches must tap and build up their expertise in several areas crucial to the welfare of their communities and nations.

6. **PREPARE PEOPLE FOR THE KINGDOM ABOVE:** Finally, the church of God must prepare people for the ultimate kingdom—the best of all kingdoms which is the kingdom of God. This is why every church must invest heavily in evangelism, missions’ outreach and church planting. Ultimately, the kingdoms of this world must give way to the kingdom of our dear Lord when He comes back to receive His world back from the principalities and powers that presently dominate activities in most nations of the world.

Conclusion

The church has a responsibility to influence the public and prepare its members for good governance here on earth. However, it is even more important to prepare them for the best-governed kingdom, which is the kingdom of God that is experienced from here into eternity.

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