

Gleanings from the Book of Proverbs: God and Country

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 14:26-35

As the Book of Proverbs instructs us concerning God, government, and citizenship, we must understand the background is that of a monarchy. There are many different forms of government, which in theory allow varying degrees of responsibility and liberty to its citizenship. The attitudes and values of leaders affect the actual freedom that people have and exercise. The United States of America is a republic. We are a nation, operating with democratic principles, in which its citizens govern themselves – a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Its leaders are voted into position by the citizenship and are to be servants, under God, to them. They are to be representatives of the people. None of these thoughts are intended to be a commentary on the Republican Party or the Democratic Party of the United States.

According to the documents of the United States, the government does not give freedom to its people. God has given certain inalienable rights. The government is supposed to honor and protect those rights. Instead of a King ruling us, we are under the authority of our constitution. In a sense, the constitution is our “King.” This means we have an obligation to be informed and involved with the constitutional rule of law in our nation. That’s hard work. Under a strict monarchy you have to cooperate with the will of a sovereign ruler. That can be hard work too. You will have to ponder when to apply these proverbs to our relationship with our nation’s constitution, and when to apply them to our relationship to elected or appointed officials. This study cannot provide a full discussion of all forms of government in the world. If you are from another country, you will have to consider and compare Scripture, and prayerfully see how God wants you to apply them to your situation. May God help us to serve Him by being godly citizens submitting to the human authority under which He has placed us.

A few observations from our Scripture reading:

Proverbs 14:26-27 – Our confidence and safety is first and foremost founded in our love and trust of God.

Proverbs 14:28-35 – Government has been established by God, to prosper and to protect a nation of people.

- **Proverbs 14:28,31** – Leaders should be dedicated to the welfare of their people / nation.
- **Proverbs 14:29-30,32-33** – Quality of character is vital, in both leadership and citizenship. We must be able to govern ourselves before we can govern others or before we can be a positive influence on society (Proverbs 16:32).

- **Proverbs 14:34-35** – A nation is made of many individual people. A nation’s prosperity depends on individual and corporate commitment to righteousness and truth. Those who serve our nation need to be committed to wisdom and integrity.

Submission – See the design of government for good that God intends (Proverbs 20:28; 29:14). For God’s sake we should honor and obey authority and pray for those who are in positions of authority (I Peter 2:13-17; I Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 12:17-21; 13:1-14; Titus 3:1-8). It must also be kept in mind that we are only to yield to the governments of men that which is assigned to them by God. Many times governments / leaders attempt to demand submission / obedience in areas that we are to give to God only (Matthew 22:15-22). Here will be a great conflict of conscience that will test our souls! Consider Proverbs 16:7,13-15; 19:12; 20:2,8,26; 22:11; 24:19-25. See a word of caution concerning humility (Proverbs 25:3,6-7 cp. Psalm 131:1-3).

Sovereignty – Some may ask, “If government is ordained of God, why are so many governments corrupt?” God put Adam and Eve in a perfect garden and gave them the responsibility to manage it. They failed their job and brought sin into the world (Romans 5:12 cp. Genesis 6:5). Since then, people still have had the job of managing the resources of the earth, organizing themselves, and, as much as possible, getting along with each other. Because we are sinners, we have a hard time doing this well. God offers all of us, including those in leadership, His knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, if we will take it (Proverbs 8:1-36 [note Proverbs 8:12-16] cp. Proverbs 3:1-8; 20:27). God’s sovereign power can overrule any / all of the world’s rulers (Proverbs 21:1; 16:1-4,9-10 [vs. 9-10 cp. other translations]). See also Acts 2:22-23; 4:24-28; Daniel 4:1-37.

Seeing God’s Perspective – The world’s greatest problem is unbelief. A byproduct of unbelief is unrighteousness. See how righteousness is a key issue with the true prosperity of a nation (Proverbs 14:34). It must start with people personally seeking and receiving God’s righteousness and then it must extend into the realms of society and government. Better laws don’t make better people. Better people make better laws. Better laws restrain people from evil and, hopefully, point them to a better way (Romans 3:10-26; 8:1-4; Galatians 3:24; Philippians 3:8-9).

Righteousness exalts a nation (Proverbs 14:34 cp. Proverbs 16:5-6,12; 25:2,4-5; 29:4; Jeremiah 9:23-24):

- Not earthly education, wealth and resources
- Not culture, luxury, and leisure with its sinful pleasures and practices
- Not military power and prowess
- Not alliances with other nations

Jesus will destroy His enemies and deliver His kingdom to the triune God (I Corinthians 15:24-28 cp. Psalm 2:1-12). Therefore, it is good that we do not fear, worry, fret, scheme, or compromise ourselves because of the failures, threats, and corruptions of man and of worldly governments. See Proverbs 24:19-22; Psalm 9:7-20; 31:1-24; 37:1-11; 46:1-11; Isaiah 40:6-31; I Timothy 6:3-16.