Bible Gateway Proverbs 21:23 :: NASB.

Verse 1 reads,

> *“The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever He wishes.”*

When the proverbs were written, the head of any governmental body was the king. Different names may have been used, such a Pharaoh, but they all pointed to the ruler or sovereign ruler.

Over the centuries, the form of government has changed, and the various titles have changed, but generally political power has been held one, or a few, individuals. That individual, or group of individuals, can have great influence of the direction a nation takes and can also affect the moral fabric of the people.

Any study of history will show this to be true. Some may be considered good leaders, but many do not truly follow the principles found in the Word of God, or even reject them?

So how is a Christian supposed to view and interact with the government under which they live? The New Testament is very clear on this. Regarding the Jewish leadership, Jesus said in ***Matthew 23:1-2***,

> *"Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, saying: 'The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them…"*

In ***Romans 13:1-7*** Paul spoke about governmental authority. He began by stating in verses 1-2,

> *"Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."*

He goes on to say that is includes paying taxes. In ***1 Peter 2:13-17***, Peter also spoke about respecting authority. He began by stating in verses 13-14,

> *“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.”*

So, Christians MUST show respect to governmental authority and representatives of that authority. But what if the government is corrupt or brutal? The Roman Empire was both corrupt and brutal when these words were written.

The only time that a Christian can oppose authority is when it is directly opposed to the Will of God as shown in His Word. Peter and John were ordered to quit teaching about Jesus Christ and the Gospel. That order they ignored.

Authority is very jealous of its power, and authority will react to any real, or perceived, threat to that power. Rome attacked Christians because of the stated belief that Jesus Christ is King. If Christians live quiet, good, honorable live, most authority will not be hostile to them.

However, a Christian can exercise his/her legal rights as a citizen. In Acts, Paul told the Philippian authorities that they had illegally imprisoned him as a Roman citizen. So, there are times when citizens can act, but it MUST be within the constraints found in the New

Testament.

In verse 3 is stated,

> *“To do righteousness and justice is desired by the Lord more than sacrifice.”*

Verse 27 also includes a warning that ties in with verse 3,

> *“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, how much more when he brings it with evil intent!”*

There is a common theme that flows through the Old and New Testaments that worship before God must be sincere and must be conducted with a humble heart. A shown, or public display, of worship is repeatedly condemned under the Law and under the New Covenant.

Micah wrote in ***Micah 6:6-8***,

> *“With what shall I come to the Lord and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”*

Jesus pointed out to His disciples the men that contributed out of their surplus, and the widow that gave all that she had. Jesus also described the arrogant prayer of the Pharisee and the humble prayer of the Publican (tax collector).

A Christian’s LIFE is to be a sacrifice to God! Paul wrote in ***Romans 12:1,***

> *“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”*

Becoming a Christian is essential for salvation, but that step cannot be taken lightly. Worship to God is a lifetime commitment.

Verse 16 states,

> *“A man who wanders from the way of understanding will rest in the assembly of the dead.”*

It is regrettable that many people become Christians and then quit and either good back to the ways of the world or go off and follow a “different” gospel. In 2 Timothy 4, Paul wrote of one of his workers Demas,

Advertisements

> *“…for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica…”*

Hebrews 6:4-8 and Hebrews 10:26-31 makes it very clear what happens to a person that turns away from his/her commitment as a Christian. Hebrews 10:26 states,

> *“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins…”,*

and then it ends in verse 31, *“It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

This warning and danger is especially true for young men and women just entering adulthood or young families. A young man or woman can be raised in a ***Christian family*** and have a love for the Lord. But sometimes, when that person leaves home and goes to school, takes a job somewhere else.

Or joins the military, he/she is with people that either do not think about Christian living or reject and laugh at such beliefs. Sadly, some will embrace “modern” thought or more academic attitudes and fall away.

Young families are involved in raising children, making a home, making a living for that family, and meeting all the demands. The married couple/young parents make a commitment to be part of a congregation, and actively serve the Lord, but this child is sick, or commitments come up that need to be met.

Slowly, gradually, the commitment fades and the interest slip away. Occasionally, the thought surfaces, “We need to get back in church like we used to”, but the thought is quickly brushed away by other, more important, demands. The children grow up with no thought of Jesus Christ or the Church, and the parents cannot understand why they act like they do.

But the warning is still there. The consequences are still there. The day will come where each person will stand before the Perfect Judge. It won’t matter that life is hectic. A career will mean nothing. It won’t matter that “I tried to be a good person.” This life IS temporary, but the decisions made in this life will have ETERNAL consequences!

Verse 23 states,

> *“He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles.”*

It is interesting how often Proverbs warns against talking too much. One example is Proverbs 15:2,

> *“The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly.”*

Too often, a statement can be made that is inappropriate or vulgar without even thinking about that was said. How many people in positions of importance or trust, have been embarrassed by words that they said because they spoke too much at the wrong time.

Friendships, partnerships, or other relationships can be damaged or even destroyed by words uttered casually.

It is easy to relax and start talking with friends or associates. Sometimes the conversation may focus on a person or an action. The Christian must be alert and choose his/her words carefully. A Christian represents the Lord.

Actions and words can reflect back against a congregation and Jesus Christ. Every Christian must live and act intentionally.

Verse 30 states,

```
“There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the Lord.”
```

Psalm 2:1-4 describes God response to such arrogance,

> *“Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us’ He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them.”*

In 1961, a Russian Cosmonaut, named Yuri Gagarin, was the first man to orbit the earth in space. After establishing orbit, he radioed and said that he looked around but did not see God. The Soviet propaganda organizations quickly proclaimed that there is no God!

More and more today scoff, reject, and insult God and His Word. Many college professors solemnly proclaim that the Bible accounts are myths. They teach scientific principles to students without considering why these principles always work.

They proclaim the fact of a theory and ignore the evidence of design in every aspect of the universe. But all these people do this at their own peril.

But none of that matters. He is the Living God, Creator, Eternal; and His Son, Jesus Christ, died to provide the one path that leads to salvation.

That is truth. That is real. The hope is real, but the consequences are also very real.