

Calendar

Group 8 Meeting — Sunday, October 4th, after morning service at Roy and Sharon Bridge's home.

Elders Meeting, this Thursday at 7:30 PM

Living Wisely in the Midst of a Wicked Government

"Folly is set in many high places..." (Eccl. 10:6a). Few of us would disagree. As we contemplate men and women in high places who violate public trust or engage in immorality or just lie to us — there is a lot not to like about government and those who govern.

Yet, it is God who ordained civil government for our good and we are commanded to be subject to the government we live under (Rom. 13:1-7). When those who govern us make decisions with which we disagree, we are still commanded to "honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:17), as difficult as that may be at times. It's especially hard when those who govern us are genuinely "wicked"; but that was the case when Peter said, "honor the king" — Nero was ruling the roost in Rome and no one can argue about his propensity for evil.

We need wisdom to endure poor, incompetent or even wicked government. Qoheleth gives us some guidance in the 10th chapter of Ecclesiastes that will help us navigate the political waters in our time.

One warning: neither Qoheleth nor the writers of the New Testament promote a particular political party. No, 10:2 does not teach that everyone who leans to the right, politically, is wise and those who bend left are fools, however much we may wish it did. He's saying a wise man's heart leads him to do things that are right or skillful while a fool's heart takes him to the "left"; he's incompetent, inept. OK, so there may be some application to the current political scene, but that wasn't Qoheleth's point.

But we do see "folly in high places" at all points on the political spectrum. Often, though not always, the folly brings them down. In my lifetime, I have seen several politicians "walk on the ground like slaves" after enjoying their time as "princes on horses" for a time. Sometimes, the task is too big for the man — he is not competent to handle the job he has. Qoheleth says it like this: "Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child..." Inexperience or lack

The church of Christ

meeting at 900 E. Natoma
PO Box 492
Folsom, CA 95630
916/608-4866

Elders

Forrest Brown: 530/295-9230
Randy Clark: 916/939-5066
Rich Ladd: 916/774-9048
David Posey: 530/676-9514
Dennis Reagan: 916/797-5539

Deacons

Brent Agee: 916/786-0436
Bryan Byrd: 916/351-9320
David Byrd: 916/985-6564
Barrett Cain: 916/351-0774
Michael Caisse: 530/672-2902
Jeff Clark: 916/985-8689
John Daniels: 916/985-3090
Jerry Deschler: 916/285-9115
Steve Dickey: 916/983-1071
Eric Fields: 916/817-6495
David Main: 650/292-5417
Terry Raposa: 916/782-1140
Dane Scott: 916/631-7221
Russ Tarrant: 530/672-1748
Steve Thompson: 916/983-4170
Jeff Warshaw: 916/933-9399

Evangelist/Editor

David Posey: 530/676-9514
dpaulposey@mac.com

Service Times

Sunday Morning Assembly
9:30 AM

Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM

Wednesday Bible Study
7:30 PM

Classes for all ages.

Private classes arranged at your convenience.

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Webmaster: Richard Harvey

of wisdom in high places is distressful to a nation. But too often, there is outright evil: can you say “Nixon,” “Blagojevich” or “Sanborn,” etc., etc. “He who digs a pit will fall into it...” (10:8).

On the other hand, when the king is experienced and wise and focused on the task at hand, we get good government (10:17). All may not agree, but I feel we had that experience with Ronald Reagan. By the time he got to White House, he was a seasoned politician and serious about the work that had to be done. He was far from perfect, but he kept his eye on the ball most of the time, and the nation was better off because of his leadership. And he honored the office — he would not even take his coat off in the Oval Office.

But not all leaders are good leaders or wise or beneficent or even kind. Some are patently wicked. As we speak, Zimbabwe is suffering under the heavy hand of Robert Mugabe, who lives in ivory tower while his people starve and live in fear for their lives. We have many brothers and sisters in Christ living there. How should they view their government? What is the wise approach in dealing with a wicked government, whether in Zimbabwe or the USA?

First, we should not be surprised when governments go bad and the powers-that-be become corrupt. “Power cor-

rupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” We have seen that cliché come true time and time again over the years. It was true in Israel’s time, even among Israel’s kings; it was demonstrated in Rome, as emperors wielded their power with an iron fist; and it has been demonstrated several times in the last one hundred years by evil men who gained influence and then absolute power: Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Saddam Hussein and on and on we could go. Power is intoxicating and when it gets in the blood of wicked men, it is devastating to a nation.

We are blessed to live in a great country founded on great principles. Fortunately, an “absolutely corrupt” leader is limited by the balance of power written into our constitution and are eventually expelled from office.

A second way that we deal with wicked governments may seem overly obvious: *don’t believe everything a politician says.* “Of course,” you say, but we need the reminder. I know Christians who get carried away with the lofty rhetoric of smooth politicians who have a lot of charisma and are able to charm their audience. But, as Qoheleth reminds us, “a fool multiplies words...” (10:14). People who govern us tend to allow their egos to get the best of them and they think they can talk us into anything. They have the “bully pulpit” and think that by the

mere multiplication of words, they will win us over, even to ridiculous ideas (like a few renegade preachers I’ve known!). Most of the time, people eventually either get bored or dulled by a fool’s words or they rebel against them in some way. Christians should take everything with the proverbial grain of salt.

Third, be careful about “cursing the king” — don’t do it! Qoheleth gives us a supremely practical reason for avoiding it: a little bird might tell him and you’ll be in his doghouse from then on. But that’s not why Christians don’t curse the king. Christians don’t curse anything or anyone. We are told to love our enemies and pursue peace (Mt. 5:44; Rom. 12:18). I was no fan of William Jefferson Clinton, but there was a lot of “cursing” going on among us back then and I fear for the souls of those of us who view anyone with contempt, including an immoral president. We can disagree adamantly with a man’s personal choices and policies, but it should never turn to contempt.

We can live under the regime of a wicked government because this world is not our home. Just use some common sense, listen carefully and respond even more carefully. Someone might think we’re unusual, and that would be a good thing.

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