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Christians and Government

Wrong View No. 3: All Government is Evil



Many believers hold fast to damaging misconceptions about government which often result in nonparticipation or inappropriate participation and, consequently, a weak witness for Christ. Unfortunately, many of these misconceptions begin in the pulpit of some churches that are not strong on biblical teaching. A clear understanding of what God's Word says about government will benefit you as you continue to mature in your faith and grow in your understanding of what God expects of you as a believer and a leader.

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

White House Cabinet & Governors: Wednesdays 8am (EST), light breakfast served
Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served
House Members: Thursdays 8am, hot breakfast served

MINISTRY UPDATE

Capitol Ministries Bible Studies Remain a Priority on Senator Ted Budd's Busy Schedule



For U.S. Senator Ted Budd, the demands of public service make it all the more important to remain faithful to the fundamentals of the Christian life: Bible study, prayer, and fellowship with other believers. Those priorities are reflected in his commitment to the Capitol Ministries weekly Bible study, which he makes an effort to attend whenever his Senate schedule allows.

"It is always on my calendar, and I make it at every opportunity," Budd says.

His appreciation for Capitol Ministries reaches back long before his service in Congress. In the early 2000s, Budd attended a Council for National Policy

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I. INTRODUCTION

This week we will examine through the lens of Scripture a third wrong view regarding the relationship between Church and state. Our last study covered the second wrong view: Government should *exclude* religion. In the study before that we examined the false idea that government should *compel* religion (by that we meant becoming theocratic). In this study we walk through what Scripture says about the following.

II. WRONG VIEW NO. 3: ALL GOVERNMENT IS EVIL AND DEMONIC

Proponents of this view deduce that civil government is a front for the forces of evil and that the institution is inherently of the devil. They reason that because governments inevitably resort to force, and force is not the way of Jesus, government, when it uses force, is emulating the ways of the devil and the world's system. Jesus instead, they argue, sought to love and serve with a patient and gentle demeanor. Said slightly differently, since force as the government uses is uncharacteristic of Jesus, government must be opposite to Jesus. The reason from Matthew 5:39 that Jesus taught His followers to "turn the other cheek." We will drill down on a proper understanding of that passage later on. Often, supporters of this worldview believe it is always wrong to use police and military force. Conversely, we should build, show love, and manifest patience. The leading advocates of this view are Wallis and Boyd.[1]

In the following discussion, points A through C will examine their misinterpreted scriptural basis of this understanding, and points D through H will examine at least five *results* stemming from an "All Government is Evil and Demonic" position.

A. THIS VIEW IS BASED ON A MISINTERPRETATION OF SATAN'S CLAIMS IN LUKE 4:6.

The main passage for this argument is Luke 4:5–7. Herein Jesus is being tempted by the devil.

And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours."

Basic to Bible study is that whenever you read a *narrative* passage quoting Satan (i.e. Genesis 3), keep in mind what else Scripture says about him. Note this in John 8:44 where Jesus says:

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

That's to say this: in Luke 4 when Satan says to Jesus regarding worldly kingdoms, ***"for it has been handed over to me,"*** he is lying! God never handed government over to the devil, as much as the devil would like to think that! Therefore, to utilize Luke 4 as a pretext for Satan's owning government is to fall for the same assumption-technique trick he tried to pull on Jesus! As a political leader, you of all people know that just because someone says something it doesn't mean it is true! Such is the case in this narrative passage found in the Gospel of Luke.

Nowhere does Scripture say that Satan is the ruler of civil government.[2]

This is the error of former Minnesota pastor Greg Boyd, the leading representative of this position today.[3] Boyd errs in misunderstanding Luke 4. Satan thinks he can dupe people by saying things with authority.

B. THIS VIEW IS BASED ON AN IGNORANT UNDERSTANDING OF PAUL AND PETER.

We have already established Jesus' declaration that Satan is a liar. Accordingly, we should not build theology on the statements of Satan in narrative portions of Scripture. Notice now in contrast to that, who the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter state is the progenitor of civil government:

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 (Romans 13:1).

Three more times in Romans 13:1–6 Paul describes civil government (to paraphrase). "Civil government is God's servant for your good." "It is the servant of God." "Governmental authorities are the ministers of God." Paul is clear and redundant that God is the author and owner of the state. Further, note Peter in 1 Peter 2:13–14:

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.

If all of civil government were controlled by evil and demonic forces, there is no way the Apostle Peter would command believers to submit to it! (See also Colossians 1:16.)

It is important to clarify that Satan does have members of governments under his control—but such is quite different than saying Satan is the CEO of civil government as a whole. "The only verse in all of the Bible that says Satan has authority over all governments is spoken by the father of lies, and we should not believe it."[4] Therefore there is no biblical basis to make the assertion that all government is evil and demonic. Rather, it is God's instrument of restraining grace in a fallen world. It is not evil; it is a restrainer of evil. This represents a huge difference in understanding.

C. THIS VIEW IS BASED ON AN IMPOUNDED UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS.

In setting forth a false dichotomy between the righteousness of Jesus and the compelling, often forceful nature of civil government, the purveyors of this position ask, "When did Jesus ever act with the sword? Did Jesus ever teach that war was justified?" These are the queries proudly postulated by pacifists such as Boyd[5] and are commonly held perceptions in today's biblically illiterate culture. Respectively, in Luke 22:36–38, Jesus did authorize the use of the sword (actually two swords!). And contextually, it was for the purposes of self-defense and protection against robbers:

And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'And He was

VERSE OF THE WEEK

1 Peter 2:13–14

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.



Civil government is God's instrument of restraining grace in a fallen world. It is not evil; it is a restrainer of evil.

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gathering with his wife, Amy Kate, where he first heard Capitol Ministries founder Ralph Drollinger speak. He remembers being "enamored with Ralph Drollinger speaking," although it would be approximately 15 years before the two would reconnect and get to know one another through CapMin.

Today, Budd expresses gratitude for the CapMin ministry team, including Randy and Paula Adams whom he enjoys seeing at the weekly gatherings. These weekly Bible Studies provide an opportunity to spend time with fellow believers amid the competing demands of public office.

Budd believes maintaining spiritual disciplines is essential for Christians serving in government. While acknowledging that he does not practice them perfectly, he emphasizes the importance of remaining consistent. "I don't claim perfection, but I do claim the attempt just to maintain the daily disciplines," he says.

"Even in these unique roles, you still have to do the basics," Budd explains. Those basics include both nurturing important relationships and remaining connected to God through spiritual disciplines. He believes public servants must not allow the demands of political life to displace the relationships and

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NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment." They said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough."

Secondly, pacifists often appeal only to the life of Jesus, versus the whole of the Bible, to advance their arguments. They impound Jesus from the remainder of the Word. But Scripture is clear in its self-attestation that ***All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and training in righteousness*** (2 Timothy 3:16). The whole of the Word is inspired by God, not just the teachings of Jesus. Remember, ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*** (John 1:1, 14; also 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Revelation 19:13). Synonymous to the living Word is the written Word. It is fundamentally erroneous (and it should catch a discerning eye), a hermeneutical violation, to attempt to isolate Christ from the remainder of *His* Scriptures. we cannot legitimately build theology on the back of Jesus' sayings only. When Paul declared to the elders, ***"I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God"*** (Acts 20:27), he wasn't referring just to Jesus.

The additional problem with using Jesus' words in the Bible as preeminent over the remainder of Scripture is the failure to differentiate between what Jesus states to individuals and what the whole of Scripture says is the purpose of the state: the biblical role of the state is to quell evil.

Numerous passages in the Bible support the idea of government utilizing force to quell evil (Genesis 9:5–6; Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–14, for example). Critically important, we need to keep in mind that the third member of the Trinity inspired the authors of each of those passages regarding God's purpose for civil government! The supposed idea that the ways of Jesus are antithetical to the ways of civil government is a false dichotomy, a false dualism, that does not bear up under the scrutiny of good exegesis.

D. THIS VIEW RESULTS IN A MORAL EQUIVALENCE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL.

What are the results of this understanding of the state? If every nation is evil, what should a person conclude when two nations go to war? Was Great Britain evil when it took on Hitler's Germany? Was America evil when it liberated Iraq from Saddam Hussein? Is it equally evil for a nation to defend itself against terrorist attacks? When we reason that "All Governments Are Evil," all governments are put on the same moral level, and evil is the nation that advances or defends against evil. Romans 13:4 states concisely to the contrary, ***It*** [civil government] ***is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.*** Nations and their actions are not patently evil according to God's Word. As a legislator or a member of the executive branch of government, you should not feel guilty when waging a just war against evildoers.

E. THIS VIEW RESULTS IN A DENIAL OF GOVERNMENTAL POWER OVER INDIVIDUALS.

Boyd exhibits a pacifistic ideology when he states the following. (Note that in Boyd's vocabulary "the kingdom of the world" and "the power of the sword" are synonyms for describing "all governments are evil and demonic.")

> Wherever a person or group exercises power over others … there is a version of the kingdom of the world. While it comes in many forms, the kingdom of the world is in essence a "power over" kingdom. … There have been democratic, socialist, communist, fascist, and totalitarian versions of the kingdom of the world, but they all share this distinctive characteristic: they exercise "power over" people.[6]

This is not a biblically informed rationale. Boyd believes government should not coerce people by threatening them with punishment. Rather, he believes Scripture teaches via the life of Jesus a "power under" versus a "power over" view of the role of government. The former is emblematic of "the kingdom of God" while the latter, "the kingdom of this world." Another way he expresses this is "Lamb Power" versus "Lion Power." "Coming under" he believes transforms people's hearts versus using force. Again, Romans 13:4 must inform our total understanding of government; Romans 13:4 serves to discount Boyd's postulations.

Civil government is a moralizing agent of God through which He purposes, vests, and manifests His restraining grace in a fallen world.

God's design for civil government includes the idea that it contains corporal[7] power and force over people in order to compel righteousness. God intends for civil government to legislate morality.

F. THIS VIEW RESULTS IN NOT DEFENDING FAMILY OR COUNTRY FROM EVIL.

A natural conclusion of believing that pacifism is more spiritual and in keeping with conformity to Christ is that its proponent will not defend against attacks on his wife, family, friends, or nation. Pacifists tend to utilize the following verses to justify their point of view. A closer investigation of each is in order.

1. ***Never pay back evil for evil*** (Romans 12:17).

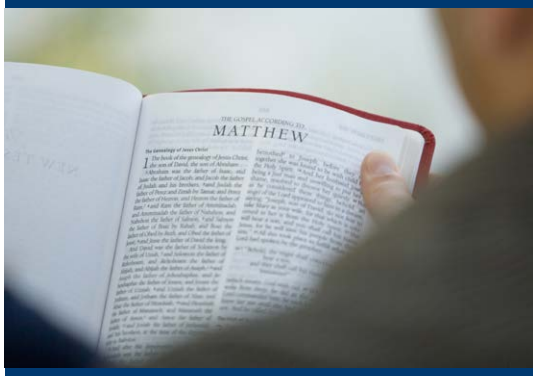
Contextually, this passage is found in a summary listing of Christian virtues. After eleven chapters of doctrine, Paul reasons how members of Jesus' Church ought to *personally* live with others. Verses 9–21 depict the corpus of the believer's attitudes in Christ. Importantly, the context pertains to how believers ought to live as members of the universal body of Christ, the Church. This is not a passage about the duties of policemen in the state or the duties of the military of the state. Eight verses later, (note verse 19 along the way!), Paul will contrast ***never pay back evil for evil*** (i.e., *personal* revenge) with the concept of permissible state revenge: Romans 13:4 indicates that the State possesses the authority to use the sword: it is ***an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.*** All that to say this: the context and contrast of the passages (Romans 12:13 with Romans 13:4) are critically important to understanding its meaning! Parachuting in on a passage and voiding it of surrounding context, as pacifists sometimes do in their use of Romans 13:4, cloaks authorial intent.

The big picture of Romans 12 is this: Paul is preaching that Christlikeness

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practices that sustain their faith.

For Budd, the opportunity to gather with other believers through Capitol Ministries fits naturally into that commitment. The weekly study offers a meaningful opportunity to remain connected to Christian fellowship and biblical teaching while carrying out the responsibilities of public office.



His message to fellow public servants is a reminder that faithful service begins with remaining close to the Lord. As Budd explains, "If God has put you here, He's certainly the one that will empower you to do it."



MINISTRY LEADER PROFILE

Prosper Boele

Ministry Leader, DR Congo



The intersection of faith and government has long been an important part of Rev. Prosper Boele's life and ministry. With a background in political science, theology, missions, and Bible teaching, Prosper is uniquely prepared for his role as Capitol Ministries' Ministry Leader in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ministering to national political leaders in Kinshasa.

After coming to faith in Jesus Christ in 1989, Prosper chose vocational Christian ministry. Over the decades, he has served as an evangelist, missionary, Bible teacher, Sunday school director, church elder, and preacher. His missionary work has taken him throughout East and Central Africa, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda.

Prosper studied political science at the University of Kisangani and later pursued extensive biblical and theological training in Africa and Israel. His studies have included training through Cru, Christ for All Nations, Global

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means believers are not vengeful people who are always looking to get even. However, if someone is being accosted in your presence, that is quite another matter outside of the intended scope of this passage's instruction. Short of a policeman near the scene of a crime, an individual can invoke upon himself the power of the state in order to shoot a murderer, for example. Making a justifiable citizen's arrest is noble; the person who does so is not ***paying back evil for evil*** in this case.

2. ***"Love your enemies"*** (Matthew 5:44).

This passage is found in the midst of Jesus' instruction in the Sermon on the Mount. A quick dispelling of a pacifistic misinterpretation of this passage is in order (as if loving your enemies means you would never punish them). It stands to reason that if we love our enemies like we do our friends and family, then we will protect them from the onslaught of a murderer or an invading country. And, should our actual enemies attack our family or friends, is it loving to allow them to hurt others? Tough love applies to both friend and foe.

3. ***"Turn the other cheek"*** (to paraphrase Matthew 5:39).

To begin with, in its tightest meaning when Jesus' choice of words is understood in their cultural setting, "turn the other cheek" means we should respond in self-control and humility when insulted by another. For brevity's sake, even personal pacifism is not in view here!

Add to this understanding of "turn the other cheek," the aforementioned clarity between Jesus' teachings regarding the demeanor of the individual believer and Jesus' teachings regarding the purpose of the state. Here in Matthew 5, Jesus is not talking about the responsibilities of civil government! Rather, He is portraying principles for individual conduct this side of heaven! Add to that, this specific portion of Scripture is not listing imperative commands but giving *general principle* illustrations (the Old Testament Proverbs are principles) of what personal conduct should look like in the lives of His followers. To illustrate the contextual idea of this portion of Scripture, a few passages later Jesus states, ***"give to one who begs of you"*** (Matthew 5:42, ESV). If this were a command in the Greek language, it wouldn't be long until, conceivably, beggars could bankrupt churches. Conversely, God also calls us to be good stewards of our resources just like He expects us to defend ourselves against evil wrongdoing.

Pacifism is taught nowhere in the Bible.

The world is fallen, mankind is depraved, and sin is rampant (especially when government enforcement is weak). Strong police forces and militaries are necessary as a result. Such fosters civility. Importantly, this next point will help to institutionally contextualize the aforementioned passages.

A. THIS VIEW RESULTS IN A BLURRING OF THE INSTITUTIONAL PURPOSES OF CHURCH AND STATE.

The advocates of pacifism who invoke the love of Jesus to stylize their understanding of the conduct of civil government err in distinguishing between the institution of the Church and the state.

While the Church is called to *evangelize* all citizens, the state is to *moralize* all citizens. God's institutional purposes as well as His institutional methodologies for achieving His purposes are quite different. The former is confined to love and is not to wield the sword while the latter is to use it when and where necessary. It seems Boyd and Wallis fail to understand biblical teaching regarding institutional methodologies. In their noble pursuit for a more loving world, they act as if the methods of the Church are the limits of the state.

Keep in mind, "Never pay back evil for evil," "Love your enemies," "Turn the other cheek" are addressed to believers in the institution of the Church, not to policemen or military personnel working in or for the state.

In Scripture, Romans 13:4 and 7 speak specifically to those who work for the state (and not the Church!): the state is to ***bear the sword***. The state is to ***avenge***. The state is to be ***feared***. These passages should—in fact, must—be applied in the context of the respective institution in view in Scripture.[8]

B. THIS VIEW RESULTS IN PACIFISM AND NATIONAL WEAKNESS.

The military force necessary to stop Hitler, based on this Bible study's scriptural analysis, was a good thing. The evil of American slavery came to an end through the use of force. That too was a good thing. Shooting a sniper perched in a school bell tower is a good thing. No one would argue that today.

To posit, however, that these wars and battles would not be necessary had someone first loved like Jesus is to deny the reality that sin and evil exist in the world, that they always have and always will. Governmental restraint is not only necessary but God-ordained to curb its ubiquity (Genesis 3:6–19; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23). Compelled by His restraining grace and love, God ordained this much-needed, valuable institution.

III. SUMMARY

The "All Governments are Evil" understanding of the state encourages believers to oppose the use of governmental force to quell evil. This is antithetical to the Bible's clear teaching in Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 that Government wields God's authority to use the sword with justice. The picture of Neville Chamberlain investing endless hours negotiating with Hitler comes to mind, as well as a defenseless Dalai Lama in the hands of an aggressive China. Do not our present-day problems with North Korea and Iran stem from an encroaching pacifism in need of immediate correction? We must think biblically here. No longer should we tolerate unbiblical pacifistic thinking. We shudder to think what would happen worldwide if America continued in a pacifistic direction. What additional aggressive nations would take advantage?

Pacifism does not curry personal favor with God. Don't think that such attitudes win favor with the Almighty, as though the pacifist is more spiritual than his "aggressive" counterpart. *In fact, one is not more spiritual who embraces pacifism; one is less spiritual.* Proverbs describes them in stark contrast to wise people (1:20). They are called naïve or ignorant: ***"How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? ... For the waywardness of the naïve will kill them"*** (1:22, 32). There is certainly much to consider.

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Baptist Training Foundation, and a Presbyterian ministry in Israel.

Building on that foundation, Prosper earned both bachelor's and master's degrees in theology, with studies encompassing missions, humanities, and political theology. He is now pursuing doctoral studies in theology with a specialization in political theology. His earlier research examined the positive influence a Christian leader can have in the politics of his nation from a biblical political theology perspective.

When Prosper discovered Capitol Ministries, he recognized a mission closely aligned with the work God had already placed on his heart: presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the political arena. He became involved with CapMin in 2022 and later participated in Capitol Ministries training in Zambia alongside ministry leaders from across Africa.

The ministry is already extending well beyond Kinshasa. Of the DRC's 26 provinces, CapMin now has representation in approximately 16, with Prosper and other leaders working toward reaching all 26. Despite challenges in some areas—including limited internet and electricity—the growing network is expanding CapMin's reach across the country.

Prosper and his wife, Philomene, have four sons.

In-depth study of Scripture is especially important to Prosper because he believes political leaders need to understand and apply the Bible for themselves. His prayer is that through this ministry, political leaders throughout the DRC will come to know Christ and be guided by His Word, bringing lasting spiritual impact to the nation."

In the Christians and Government study series we explore

PART 1: Wrong View No. 1: Government Should Compel Religion

PART 2: Wrong View No. 2: Government Should Exclude Religion

PART 3: Wrong View No. 3: All Governments Are Evil and Demonic

PART 4: Wrong View No. 4: Believers Should Do Evangelism and Not Politics

PART 5: Right View: A Biblically-Reasoned Understanding of the Separation of Church and State

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1. Wallis, Jim *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2005). Boyd, Greg *The Myth of a Christian Nation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).
2. Confer with Ephesians 6:12. No mention of governmental rule is listed in this main passage regarding the reign of the devil.
3. Boyd, Greg *The Myth of a Christian Nation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). On page 21 he says that all civil government is demonic. On page 22 he states, "Functionally, Satan is the acting CEO of all earthly governments."
4. Grudem, Wayne *Politics According to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010) p. 38. It is important for me to state often that I am following the outline of this book, with permission, in these complex studies.
5. Ibid. p. 59, 168, 91.
6. Ibid. p. 18.
7. Corporal: Relating to or involving the physical body rather than the mind or spirit.
8. More broadly biblical institutions have a variety of different respective descriptors beyond those listed herein. For instance, state leaders possess no biblically-explicit character qualifications necessary for holding office, while leaders in the Church do (cf. 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1). Since there are no biblical character qualifications or limitations for policemen or military personnel in Genesis 9, Romans 12, or 1 Peter 2, that Matthew 5 and Romans 12 cannot necessarily be applied to them as virtues that are essential to holding their position in civil government, especially as it relates to the dispatch of their God-given duties. This is not to say that it is impossible for a Christian to serve in the police or military.

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