

The Gift of Governments

by Chuck Smith

The gift of governments is a spiritual gift that enables individuals to lead and govern others in a way that is pleasing to God.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6, 1 Corinthians 12:28

Topics: "Godly Leadership", "Gifts of Government"

Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the divine order of government within the church, highlighting that God has appointed leaders with specific gifts to promote the common welfare and uphold justice. He reflects on the monarchy as the highest form of government, with Jesus as the ultimate King, and stresses the importance of leaders being governed by God to avoid corruption. Smith warns against the dangers of misrepresentation of God by leaders and encourages the congregation to recognize their unique gifts for the glory of God. He concludes by affirming the need for godly leadership that serves the people, ensuring that the church remains aligned with God's will.

Transcript

Paul tells us that:

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:28)

It is interesting to me that the first mention of government in the Bible is in the prophecy of Isaiah.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

So we recognize that in God's order the finest and the highest form of government is that of a monarchy. It is a most efficient form of a government, providing that you have a good monarch. And when Jesus comes to establish God's government upon the earth, He will be here as King of kings and as Lord of lords.

Now the purposes of government should be to promote the common welfare, to insure domestic tranquility, and to establish and enforce laws that will guarantee the common welfare of the society.

Government should seek to eliminate the evil and to preserve the good.

And there are men whom God has gifted with the gifts of government. We often say concerning a person that he is a gifted leader or that he just seems to be a natural leader. We say that he has the kind of personality or the kind of demeanor and leadership to which people are attracted.

As we look around the world today, we find that there are people whom God has gifted with different types of gifts and talents. There are those that we would classify as gifted musicians. There are people who are gifted in math and they do not have to study like you or I have to study in order to learn math. It just seems to come naturally to them. They are just gifted in that area. And so it is important that we discover and learn the gifts God has given to us, because all of you are special and all of you are unique. When God created you He threw away the mold and He wanted you just as you are--special and unique as you are. And He has given to you special aptitudes and special giftings.

Now these gifts and talents that God has given to people always find their highest use and highest expression when they are used to glorify the Lord. And if you use those gifts to bring glory to yourself, or if you use those gifts for your own personal profit and gain, in a sense you are prostituting the gifts that God has given to you. Those gifts are for the profit of the whole body and they are to glorify the Lord.

There are many forms of government that men have tried throughout the history of mankind. Some of the earliest forms of government were feudal serfdoms with local kings over villages or cities. And these gradually developed into monarchies that ruled over sections and ultimately over nations. And so, this led to the form of government known as a monarchy.

The United States was formed as a republic, in a constitutional form of government. And as a republic, we have what is known as a representative form of government. That is, the people elect men or women to represent them in the formation of the laws by which the nation will be governed.

I think all of the flap that is being made by some of the candidates concerning our desire to know where they stand on issues that are very important to us as Christians is rather pathetic and tragic. If they are to represent us and if we do have a representative form of government, the idea is that we are to elect people who represent us. They should represent our thinking and our ideals and they should be seeking to promote them. And if they are there to represent me, I want to know that they are properly representing my feelings and my values.

I do not want to see our schools dispensing condoms. And if a school board member, or one who desires to be on the school board, would be voting to use the tax dollars that are designated for education to buy and to distribute condoms to the students, that does not represent how I feel. And if that is the way they feel and would vote, that does not represent me. And I feel that I have a right to know how they feel on these very important moral issues.

There are those who believe that it is wonderful and very commendable that the homosexual community wants to know their positions concerning legislation on homosexuality. However, the moment we want to know how they stand on truly moral issues, they begin to scream, "Foul!" They begin to cry, "Separation of church and state!" This is a bunch of dust thrown in the air to cloud the issue.

I would be the first one to object to a state church. The quickest way to kill the church of Jesus Christ is to let it join the state, or let the state join the church. You are going to guarantee that it is going to be dead

before long. Every state church has come to a sad, pathetic spiritual death. I want separation of church and state. I value the separation of church and state. But that does not mean the separation of state from morality, from decency, from common sense, or from the moral issues that make a nation strong or that destroy a nation.

And so, it is not an issue of the church trying to impose its will upon society. Although, it does seem that the other side wants to impose their will on society and they seem to feel that is quite all right. It is all right for them to impose their low standards on society--impose pornography and abortion rights--that is fine with them. But oh how they scream when we say, "Well, we would like candidates who would have the gumption to stand up for what is decent and what is pure and what is right." I could get upset over issues like this.

There are totalitarian forms of government where people are ruled by dictatorships. They really do not have a true say in those who represent them. They only have ballots where they vote yes or no on the candidate. They are already selected so there are no real choices involved. And sometimes I question how much of a choice we actually have in the candidates that we have to vote for.

Actually all of these forms of government that have been devised by man are unsuccessful. Man has definitely proven that he is thoroughly incapable of governing over his fellow man without graft, without corruption, and ultimately destroying every form of government that man has attempted. Because of greed, man is incapable of ruling over his fellow-man in righteousness.

The only form of government that God endorsed and established was theocracy--God ruling over the nation of Israel. The name Israel means "governed by God." God ruling over the nation is a theocracy. Now Moses was a leader of the people, but he acted as God's representative; and thus, with the gifts of government, Moses was the accepted earthly leader. However, it was recognized that Moses was being guided and governed by God.

When the children of Israel saw the fire and the thunder and the fire rolling on the ground on Mount Sinai, they said to Moses, "You go up and talk to God. Find out what He has to say and come back and tell us. And whatever He says we will obey. But we do not want to try and approach the mountain. You go up and you talk to Him" (cf. Deuteronomy 5:27). So it was recognized that Moses went to God and that God directed Moses and the things that Moses spoke were God's guidance and God's rules for the people.

But there was that consciousness that God reigns and God rules over the nation. And as they would set up their camp with the tabernacle (the place of meeting) God was right in the center of the camp. All of the tribes were pitched around the tabernacle with the tent doors facing the tabernacle. The moment they would come out of their tents looking ahead, they would see the tabernacle of God. If it was at night, they would see the pillar of fire above the tabernacle and they were conscious of the fact that: "We are being governed by God. We are God's people."

In the day there would be the cloud which, again, was reminding them that they were God's people. They were being governed by God. If you will look at the covenant God made with them: "If you will allow Me to govern over you; if you will obey My commandments; if you will follow after Me." God gave them promise after promise of power, of greatness, of strength, and of blessings. None of the plagues that came upon the Egyptians would come upon them and they would rule over their enemies. They would be lenders and not borrowers and all of the things that God would do--"If you will just follow Me and let Me rule over you."

But then God predicted the dire consequences that would come to them when they came to the place where they refused to allow God to rule over them. And if you will not obey these commandments that I give unto you--God then began to describe the disastrous results of any nation that rejects His rule.

It should be recognized that God rules through gifted men who are gifted by the Holy Spirit.

Now as Moses was ruling over the people and the burden became heavier than he could bear--Moses finally complains, "I did not give birth to all these people." He was submitting his resignation really. God instructed Moses to take seventy of the elders of Israel, and bring them into the tent of the congregation. And God would take the Spirit that he put upon Moses and He would put it upon the seventy elders that they might assist him in ruling over the people (cf. Numbers 11:16).

And so, filled with the Spirit, they were able to then help Moses in the governing over the nation. And rather than Moses hearing all of the complaints, the seventy elders would hear the complaints and when they had an issue that they could not resolve, they would bring it then to Moses. Moses in turn, would take it to God and God would direct Moses; and thus, the people were aware and conscious that God was reigning over them. He was using these human instruments to represent Him to the people. What a glorious thing, when a person rules in such a way that the people are aware and conscious that it is really God who rules.

Now the Bible gives several rules to those who would exercise a role of leadership or a role of governing. 2 Samuel 23:3 says,

The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

Let me say that any man who does not have the fear of God has no right to rule over his fellow man. He is not qualified. I will guarantee that any man who does not have the fear of God will be a corrupt ruler. He will be crooked and dishonest.

In Romans 12:8, Paul talks of the gift of governments and in speaking of the gift of ruling he said, "And he that ruleth with diligence." It is an awesome responsibility to represent God to the people, because God does not like to be misrepresented any more than you like to be misrepresented.

God does not like to be misrepresented either. He does not like people saying, "Well, God said..." when He did not say it. And God tells what He is going to do to those prophets who are going around saying, "Well, God said..." when God did not say it. "Woe be unto the prophets!" They are going to have to answer to God when they go around saying, "Well, God said..." and God did not say it. He does not like being misrepresented.

And thus, when we lead or have a role of leadership, we must do so in the fear of God with all diligence, making certain that we do not misrepresent God to the people. That was the sin that kept Moses out of the Promised Land. When the people came at the waters of Meribah, and said, "Moses, we are dying of thirst. We are sorry we ever left Egypt. We have been in this wilderness for forty years. You have not brought us into the Promised Land. We were crazy to ever listen to you." And they were ready to stone Moses. And Moses went in before the Lord just totally upset with the way the people were treating him. He was angry at the people.

In Numbers 20, God said, "Moses, go out and speak to the rock that water might come forth for them." And Moses went out to the people and he said, "You rebels! How long do I have to put up with you? Must I smite this rock again to give you water?" And he took his rod and smote the rock. God is so gracious, so loving and so kind that water came gushing out. And the people drank and were refreshed.

But God said, "Moses, come here, son. Moses, what did I tell you to do?" "Speak to the rock." "How is it, Moses, that you smote the rock? Moses, you did not represent Me before the people. You misrepresented Me. They think I am mad at them. They think I am angry with them. They think I am upset because you failed to represent Me. Moses, you will not be able to lead them into the Promised Land."

"Wait a minute, Lord. Wait a minute. Forty years I have been putting up with these people just for the hope of leading..."

"Do not talk to Me any more about it, Moses. It is a closed issue because you failed to represent Me before the people at the waters of Meribah."

That is how important it is that we are representing God in truth. And I wonder how many times even in the ministry when we have personal frustrations because the church is not growing as rapidly as we think it should. Or there are some rumblings in the church and we are upset. And because we are angry, when we preach it is sort of through clenched teeth. And people think, "Oh, God is really mad at us tonight!" And we do not accurately represent God to the people.

And I wonder if God gets upset with us and says, "Wait a minute! I am not angry with them. I love them. You are My representative and from the things you said and the way you said them, now they feel that I am really angry with them and upset and ready to toss them out!" Oh, how we have to be careful in ruling, because as rulers we are representing God to the people. And we must be careful that we do not misrepresent Him.

Proverbs 12:24 says, "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule." I think that that is probably what Paul was quoting when he said, "And he that ruleth with diligence" (cf. Romans 12:8). He probably was thinking of that Proverb--"The hand of the diligent shall bear rule." Now ruling as God's representative is not really lording over people.

Mark 10:42-45 says,

But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

So Jesus said to His disciples the night that He was betrayed, when He took the towel and washed their feet, "You see what I have done?" They said, "Yes, Lord." He said, "Now you call me Lord and Master and that is correct because that is what I am. But if I, being your lord and master, wash your feet, then you ought to wash one another's feet" (cf. John 13:12-15). In other words, He said, "I am giving you an example of how you are to rule over the people. How you are to exercise your leadership. It is to take the place of a servant. If you are going to represent Me, you must take the place of a servant. You must be available to the people."

Paul said, in writing to Timothy, "This is a true saying. If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work" (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1). Now the bishop was an overseer (or a ruler or a governor) within the body of Christ. The English word bishop in the Greek is *episcopas*. And thus, you have the Episcopalian church that follows this form of government with the bishops, or the *episcopas*.

Paul also speaks of the elders and the Greek word is *presbyturos*. And from that you get the word Presbyterian; and thus, the Presbyterian Church. They call themselves Presbyterians because of the form of government which is ruled by a board of elders or the *presbyturos*. And thus, there is the division between the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians over whether or not the church should be ruled by the bishops or by the board of elders.

But here, Paul is talking about the bishops or the overseers. He said,

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

(1 Timothy 3:2-6)

Now as Paul lists these qualifications for one who would be a bishop or an overseer in the church, I think he fully eliminates everybody with even just the very first requirement of being blameless. It is interesting how certain people will jump on certain requirements and they sort of emphasize them over others. It appears that there are some of the things in the list that seem to be certain disqualifications; while with others, we are willing to compromise a bit. The overseer is not to be covetous. Have you ever looked at your neighbor's fancy sports car and wished it was yours? Coveted?

Now no man can truly exercise leadership over others unless he is conscious of the fact that he himself is ruled. No man can rule who is not ruled. That is why I said "the fear of God" is an important and a necessary trait for anyone who would be in leadership over men.

When the Centurion requested that Jesus heal his servant, he said, "You do not have to come. For I also am a man under authority and I have under me men." (cf. Luke 7:8). In other words, there is a chain of command. I am under authority. I have those above me, but I also have those below me. I am in a chain of authority. I am under authority, but I have authority over others. And I can say I know what authority is about. "I can say to one, 'Go,' and he goes. Another, 'Come,' and he comes" (cf. Luke 7:8).

The Bible establishes many chains of command or levels of authority. But always God is at the top and unless a man is aware that he is governed by God and is responsible to God and will have to answer to God, that man is not qualified to have authority. When you give authority to that kind of man who is not governed by God, he will take advantage of it and he will soon pervert his authority to his own benefit and become a tyrant. No man can rule who is not ruled and has that awareness that "I am responsible unto One who is higher than I. And I will answer to him."

What we have in the United States today is a very sad situation, where many people who have been given authority do not recognize the authority of God in their lives. And thus, they are guilty of gross violations of their authority. Many judges feel that they are the end--that they are the gods. And they treat others as

though they are the gods. They are not realizing that they are responsible to God and one day will answer to God for their judging. As judges they are supposed to represent God in their judgments. And if a judge is wise, before he makes a decision he will seek the wisdom and the guidance and the direction of God in the decisions that he makes. He is going to have to answer to God for those decisions that he makes.

2 Samuel 23:3 says,

The God of Israel said, the rock of Israel spake to me, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."

Nebuchadnezzar, that great ruler over the Babylonian kingdom, was acknowledged by God as probably one of the greatest leaders in the history of man in 2 Kings. With the images of the governments of man, his was the head of gold and superior to all other kingdoms. All other kingdoms after Babylon were inferior to the Babylonian kingdom. Even as silver is inferior to gold, so shall the kingdom be inferior to the Babylonian kingdom. And there was the gradual degrading down to the feet of iron and clay. They lessened from the valuable gold to the silver to the brass to the iron and finally to the iron and clay, as forms of government deteriorate through history.

But because of his greatness and his reign and his rule over the earth, Nebuchadnezzar began to rule out God. He thought that he was at the top and that he was the final authority. Those whom he condemned, he would. Those whom he would raise up, he would. There was no appeal to any higher power than that of Nebuchadnezzar. What he said went and there was no appealing it to any court.

But he was lifted up with pride and God humbled him. And God allowed him to experience a time of insanity "to the intent that the living might know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and He gives it to whomsoever He will, and He can set over it the basest of men." This is a classic example for us today. "Until you know," He said, "that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men" (cf. Daniel 4).

Now there is such a tremendous need for good leadership. Now Moses recognized that he was ready to pass off the scene. This great leader, the man who led the nation in its birth and in its beginning phases, the man who brought to the nation the laws of God, the man who brought them out of the bondage in Egypt under the direction of God to form a nation--as he was getting ready to die he said,

Moses spake to the Lord saying,

Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.

And the Lord said unto Moses,

Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit... and lay thy hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him, that all of the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: and at his word shall they go out, and at his word shall they come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all of the congregation. (Numbers 27:16-21)

And there again is the qualification for leadership: he is a man who has the Spirit, a man who is governed by the Spirit, and a man who is led by the Spirit.

So this was the establishing of the leader to take Moses' place. But here he is to consult God before the priest Eleazar to get the directions from God, when they are to go and when they are to stop. And thus the people knew that the reign of God continued. Though Moses died, the reign of God continued. There is no diminishing of the nation because the next man coming in is filled with the Spirit and is reigning under the guidance and the direction of God.

Isaiah 9:16 tells us,

For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.

And that is the sad consequence of poor leadership--the nation was destroyed. Jesus said, "If the blind lead the blind, they will both fall in the ditch" (cf. Matthew 15:14).

Proverbs 29:2 says,

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked are beareth rule, the people mourn.

Now although there is a responsibility for those who are being ruled, there are tremendous responsibilities on those who would rule--those who would have the gifts of government and exercise them in the body of Christ. But for those who are being ruled, Hebrews declares, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their manner of living" (cf. Hebrews 13:7). In other words, consider the end of a godly life, a righteous life; and thus, you are to follow after those who are living godly, instructing you in the Word of God.

Paul the Apostle said,

Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Hebrews 13:17 says,

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Now there are those in the shepherding movement who take this as their key Scripture and they hold people in horrible bondage. They say you are to obey those who have rule over you and you must submit yourselves to them, for they watch for your souls.

When I was in Germany this past summer at the pastors' conference in Siegen, there was a young girl who came to me and wanted to talk to me with her boyfriend. She was greatly disturbed. She was going to a church there in Siegen that was into what is commonly termed the "shepherding doctrine." This is where the person in the church really cannot make any decisions on their own, but are required to talk to the shepherd of the church concerning every decision. You are not to buy a car, you are not to buy clothes, you are not to buy a pair of shoes, unless he gives you the permission to do so. You go and you talk to him and he will guide you in the ways and in the things of the Lord.

And this girl was there and she was being held in bondage because they said, "If you disobey us, you are disobeying God and you are going to hell! And if you go to another church, you are going to hell because you are rebelling against the authority of the church." And this poor girl was miserable and she had been coming to Calvary Chapel on the sly. And she was afraid the pastor might find out and consign her immediately to hell. It was tragic because they were holding her in such bondage. And Hebrews 13:17 is the Scripture that they gave to her.

Now whenever you have any chain of command, again, the final authority is God. And I showed her where Jesus showed us, if we were to be the rulers, how we were to be the servants of all. We were not to hold people in bondage and the threats of hell because that is not like our Lord, and that is not representing our Lord.

Finally in Hebrews 13:24 it says,

Greet all of them that have rule over you and all the saints.

So you are to remember them, follow them, obey them as they obey the Lord and lead you in the ways of the Lord. And then you are to greet them, having that kind of closeness. It is a glorious thing when there are those called of God to lead the people of God and there is that kind of bond of love and serving one another and submitting unto one another in the love of Jesus Christ.

Here in the church, we follow sort of a theocratic form of government. We recognize that Jesus Christ is the head of the body, the church. He is the final authority and all of the decisions are deferred to Him. We have a church board that works with us and we meet each month and we discuss various issues of the church. We discuss various needs and the various directions. But at each board meeting, before we start, we always begin with prayer recognizing that Jesus is Lord over His church and that we are there only to implement His desires and His wishes. We are not there to rule and we are not there even to make decisions. We are there to find His decision and then to implement His desires.

And I thank God that He has blessed me with a board of men who are earnestly desiring to know the mind of the Lord and to implement the wishes of Jesus Christ concerning this church. They are men who are filled with the Spirit and men who have the gifts of government. Surely our church is blessed. And we are being blessed because of such men with the gifts of government who are seeking God through prayer for His direction, His will, and His purposes for the church.

There is one other Scripture that declares, "Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!" (cf. Psalm 144:15). And there is the joy and the happiness that we have because we seek to allow the Lord to truly be Lord and to guide the church in His path.

Shall we pray?

Father, we do thank You for the gifts of government and the way they are being exercised here in the church. And Lord, we thank You for the recognition that this is a church that is governed by God, as we look to You, Lord, for guidance and for direction and for wisdom. Lord, how we desire that the church reflect everything that You want the church to be, so that we might be true and faithful witnesses, Lord, to the world. Lord, bless, we pray and continue to bless Your people as we seek to follow You as the Lord over the church. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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