

"Defending the Faith in the Political Environment"

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Christians are uniquely both a citizen of earth and also a citizen of heaven. Therefore, believers in Jesus Christ should have concern for their country as a citizen and as a child of God. As it is general knowledge, apologetics involves the public defense of belief in the Lord Jesus. Certainly, there is nothing more public than "public service," and all know just how public the current presidential election is. The question for us is: "How do we defend the faith in the political environment?" "What role should our Christian faith have in the realm of politics?"

If humanity were constituted as mere physical beings – possessing no spiritual life – then, in the most favorable view, apologetics would be trivial. However, if humanity were constituted as spiritual beings, in addition to being physical beings, then apologetics has a more superlative purpose. The truth that one believes in "the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus," and that "by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth," and that both citizens and leaders are accountable to Him for their actions, is the reason that apologetics has a significant purpose among governing authorities.

We believe in the existence of God and also affirm that we are responsible to Him for all our actions. Therefore, how could we ever think that the political environment does not also possess a spiritual dimension? The only reason to think that it does not would be the consequence from disavowing God's existence.

The political environment can be (and often is) a difficult environment in which the believer can provide a Christian apologetic (i.e. knowledge and application of the inerrant and infallible truths of Scripture). Scripture does reveal how the church should behave toward government officials and how to minister to them, in addition to God's desire for governing authorities. God's decree is evident in that He providentially appoints political leaders. Authorities do not derive their power from the consent of the governed; rather, civil authority is derived from God (cf. Dan 2:21; John 19:10-11). Every human being is made in God's image and has his "Law written in their hearts" (Rom 2:15; cf. 13:5). Therefore, even non-Christian lawmakers can outlaw evil without cognizance that their criterion "for good" is derived from God. Of course, there are rare times when Christians cannot submit to the state (e.g. Exod 1:15-22; Dan 6; Acts 4:19-20). Christians cannot disobey what God has commanded, nor obey what is contrary to Scripture. Government officials often do not understand God's sovereign decree, thus the church must educate them with such crucial truths.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Civil disobedience involves a conscientious, nonviolent, and public violation of law or policy of the government with the intent of affecting social change. Since acts of civil obedience involve nonviolence and publicness, they are distinguished from illegal acts, and therefore, easier to defend. The motivation for civil disobedience is conscientious, as opposed to considerations that are merely pragmatic or

prudential. The decision to participate in such an act is typically for the benefit of society, such as causing attention or interest to be directed toward injustice, which thereby stimulates moral consciousness, and initiates the vigorous activity of social change.

The concept of civil disobedience is identifiable in antiquity. Socrates chose death rather than cease pursuing truth and wisdom. Addressing his countrymen, he declared, "I shall obey God rather than you." Even the Bible provides lucid examples for civil disobedience. The Hebrew midwives refused the command of Pharaoh to violate the sanctity of life (Exod 1:15-22). Although the authority of a government may be vast, a Christian understanding of human authority is that none is absolute. Romans 13:1-2 teaches that the legal ordinances and statutes of the state must be obeyed because God ordains the powers. However, it would appear that Paul was referring to legitimate governments and just laws; there are illegitimate governments and unjust laws so that obedience to corrupt or immoral practices is not an option. Obedience to the law of God may require participation in civil disobedience, and those who engage in such acts must be willing to accept the consequences of disobedience to the authority of the state. However, it must be undeniable that the only means of faithfulness to God is an act of civil disobedience. The Bible has commanded submission of the church to government regulations that undoubtedly propose to protect public health and safety (e.g. emergency power, fire extinguishers, vehicle emissions testing, etc.). However, God has not established the government to control or impede the beliefs and practices of his church, which would also include any of its ministries. God created the church and state with specific responsibilities; therefore, each is to function within the particular area that He has determined.

A PRIMER TO ROMANS 13

Romans 12:1 urges believers "by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." The language used is not trite; rather, it acknowledges an ever-present reality within the ancient Roman Empire because emperors could take the life of anyone. For example, Herod the Great attempted to take the life of the newborn king of Israel (Jesus) by decreeing murder for all male children who were two years old and younger in Bethlehem and its vicinity (Matt 2:16-18). Herod's son, Herod Antipas, celebrated his birthday by ordering the beheading of John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-29). Even though Antipas enjoyed listening to John (Mark 6:20), he gave the order "because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests" (Mark 6:26). One's life could be taken capriciously in the Roman Empire.

Caligula and Tiberius Gemellus were first appointed as co-emperors. When the Senate and the people later chose Caligula to be the sole ruler, he murdered Gemellus. Caligula also murdered his relatives, tortured and killed people while eating, named his favorite horse as his counselor, declared himself to be a god, and dedicated sacrifices and temples to himself. Caligula was assassinated, and his uncle, Claudius I, became the next emperor. Claudius delegated his responsibilities to his wife, Messalina, who he later murdered. He married his niece, Agrippina the

Younger, who was responsible for his poisoning. Prior to his death, Claudius banished all the Jews from Rome due to unrest from believers proclaiming the good news that God's salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 18:2).

Nero became emperor following Claudius' death. He was the "governing authority" when the Book of Romans was written (AD 57). Nero had his mother murdered (when he was age 22), and later divorced and murdered his wife. Nero instigated the great fire that consumed Rome in AD 64, yet he blamed the Christians. Consequently, he tortured and murdered Christians publicly, and eventually took the lives of the apostles Paul and Peter. When his policies were questioned, Nero killed himself in AD 68.

The relentless persecution of the church did not cease until Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in AD 313. Constantine believed that God granted him victory in battle. Consequently, he would later grant tremendous privilege and power to the church, which was not good because Christians adapted themselves to the paradigms of imperial governance. The relationship between the church and the state has provoked interesting discussion since this historical time.

The reason for the historical introduction is necessary in order to fully appreciate the challenging words of Romans 13 not only in the past but also in the present time. Verse 1 commands "every person . . . to be in subjection to the governing authorities" because "those which exist are established by God." When we consider the experience of the early church, we can understand the difficulty of the biblical command. We can imagine believers wondering how it is possible that murderous rulers were "established by God," and then thinking why would they need "to be in subjection" to them. Can you also imagine the emotions and thoughts of the church when the "Christian" ruler (Constantine) became emperor?

Romans 13 is an important biblical passage for the church throughout the ages, as is all Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17). The commands therein were certainly relevant for a church that lived under the rule of murderous emperors. The instruction, however, is also necessary for understanding that "governing authorities" are not everlasting. Christians are destined for an eternal inheritance, which has no comparison to anything in this life. Therefore, believers are to submit to the authorities, love one another, and "behave properly."

Consequently, we can discern that apologetics has a significant function in the realm of politics. In the time of the early church, most Christians were subjects of the Roman Empire, and encountered a succession of emperors who disliked Christianity and persecuted believers. Romans 13 provides the biblical apologetic with regard to a Christian's responsibility to governing authorities.

CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP IN POLITICS

Christians did not make any attempt to formulate a theory of relationship between the church and the state until Christianity became legalized in the fourth century. Prior to Christianity being made a state religion, when the church had no legal right to exist, believers heeded the biblical admonition "to be in subjection to the governing authorities" (Rom 13:1), *except* when such submission conflicted with the

explicit command of God with regard to the proclamation of the gospel message (cf. Acts 5:29).

Submission to governing authorities is the utmost practice of the Christian relationship to government. The reason for the subjection is because “there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.” Scripture, therefore, affirms, “whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God.” Those who resist will thus “bring condemnation upon themselves.”

Authorities do not derive their power from the consent of the governed; rather, civil authority is derived from God (cf. Dan 2:21; John 19:10-11). Every human being is made in God’s image and has God’s “Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness” (Rom 2:15; cf. 13:5). Therefore, even non-Christian lawmakers can outlaw evil without cognizance that their criterion “for good” is derived from God, and the church can obey knowing that civil authorities accomplish the work of both punishing the evil and rewarding the good (Rom 13:1-7).

Pope Gelasius I initially stated the doctrine of “two swords,” especially in his well-known letter to Emperor Anastasius in 494. Gelasius asserted that the world is ruled by two entities established by God and having distinct purposes: “the sacred authority of the priesthood and the royal power.” He wrote those words in the context of Roman bishops assuming responsibility for judicial matters, military defense, and other secular matters (to some extent as a consequence of ineffective leadership in the Western Roman Empire, and authority believed to be inherent to the bishop of Rome as the successor of Peter). The “two swords” doctrine was commonly accepted throughout the Middle Ages; however, questions still persisted with regard to the exact nature of that supremacy. Indeed, the church struggled for freedom from intrusion by governing authorities throughout the early Middle Ages. The crowning of Charlemagne as emperor (AD 800) by Pope Leo III was most significant for resolving tension with Constantinople. Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) created much controversy when he declared that “royal power” was subordinate to “the sacred authority of the priesthood.”

With regard to both the political and the spiritual, the Protestant Reformers challenged the authority of the church in general and the papacy in particular. Martin Luther argued for liberty as the very essence of the Christian faith. In his essay, “On the Freedom of a Christian” (1520), he argued that the conscience belongs to God alone and thereby defended Christian charity and freedom against the subjective control of either church or state. The doctrine of faith as a gift of God weakened the effects of the Roman Inquisition and the Holy Office, and the “Index Librorum Prohibitorum” (an index of forbidden books published by Pope Paul IV in 1559), and thus articulated a theological foundation for religious liberty.

Luther also proclaimed that all work should be done to the glory of God (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31). He taught that all honest work is pleasing to God, and thus all labor was a sacred calling whether one was ministering the gospel, plowing the field, or scrubbing floors. The doctrines of the Reformation contributed to the idea of freedom for the market and society, as apposite economic and political expressions. Capitalism developed as the economic expression of the doctrine of justification. The seventeenth-century Calvinists articulated the foundation for both English and

American civil rights and liberties (e.g. freedom of speech, press, and religion; the independence of juries; the privilege against compelled self-incrimination; the right of habeas corpus; and, the right not to be imprisoned without just cause).

Political justice is thus based upon a biblical understanding of human nature and human choice. For example, criminals are detained by the state to be held accountable for their actions, as opposed to excusing such behavior as the result of environmental conditioning. The biblical understanding of human nature provides a formative basis by which one can discern flawed political philosophies. For example, many utopian politics theories are formulated based upon flawed assumptions. Plato's *Republic* (360 BC) was an ideal government wherein enlightened philosopher-kings would govern. However, the Bible teaches that all humanity is sinful (Rom 3:23), thus Plato's proposed leaders would be affected totally by the effects of the Fall, and would be unable to manifest the benevolent and enlightened disposition so necessary for the republic to succeed. Similarly, the Marxist view of government was based upon the belief that human nature was conditioned by society in general and by capitalism in particular. Marx proposed that if government changed the economy, then human nature would subsequently change.

The doctrine of justification by faith promoted individual independence, and thus constitutionalism, egalitarianism, and religious liberty were social consequences of the Protestant Reformation. From the sixteenth century until modern times, the primary impetus for the renewal of law in the West was the notion of the power of the individual who—by the grace of God—could impact the world and create new social relations through the exercise of the will. The notion of the individual was foundational to the development of modern laws. Two noteworthy individuals in the history of law are Samuel Rutherford (1600-61) and Sir William Blackstone (1723-80). Rutherford's *Lex Rex*, or *The Law and the Prince* (1644) had a profound effect upon British and American governments.

Rutherford's treatise challenged the foundation of politics in his day by proclaiming law must be based upon the Bible, as opposed to the word of any human being. His work contradicted the notion of the divine right of kings, which was the teaching that the king (or the state) ruled as God's appointed regent. Therefore, the word of the king was regarded as law. Rutherford argued from biblical passages such as Romans 13, that the king (in addition to anyone else) was subject to the law of God. According to Rutherford, the civil authority is a "fiduciary figure," who possesses authority in trust for the people. Violation of that trust would provide a political basis for civil disobedience. Blackstone was an English jurist who is famous for his *Commentaries on the Law of England* (1765), which embodied the tenets of Judeo-Christian theism, and became the definitive treatise for common law in American and England. Blackstone revolutionized his government by teaching that all human law is based upon two foundations: the law of nature and the law of revelation (the Bible).

William Wilberforce

Late one night, a member of the British Parliament sat at his desk studying documents regarding the slave trade. William Wilberforce was already maturing

quickly in importance and popularity within the political realm, yet he had become a Christian two years earlier, in 1784. When he considered resigning, ex-slave trader John Newton, who was then a pastor, convinced Wilberforce that his most important spiritual duty was to remain as a witness for Christ.

He had already been challenged by other Christians to consider slavery from a biblical perspective. Wilberforce was not naïve for he knew that many of his contemporaries regarded slavery as hideous and inhuman but a necessary evil. If he were to oppose slavery, Wilberforce could almost certainly expect that his political career would be halted abruptly, resulting in antagonism toward him from influential enemies, including the royal family.

Nevertheless, as he studied the current facts, in light of the Word of God, he was convinced with regard to the will of the Lord. On Sunday, 28 October 1787, subsequent to a conversation with Newton, he penned a memorable entry in his journal: "God Almighty has placed before me two great objects: the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners [i.e. public morals]." Wilberforce already had a political career, albeit he now received a God-given mission that stimulated his resolve for the next fifty years and eventually led to the transformation of British society. His parliamentary campaign against the slave trade eventually led to the passing of the Slave Trade Act of 1807.

With a profound biblical allegiance to the central distinguishing doctrines of Christianity, Wilberforce understood the impact of these beliefs upon the political welfare of a nation. Conviction of these doctrines, he said, gives rise to true affections for spiritual things. It breaks the power of pride, greed and fear, and it transforms the morals of an entire nation. If true Christianity gains ground, "there is no estimating the effects on public morals ["manners"], and the consequent influence on our political welfare. Like Wilberforce, the church must know that submission to the Lord Jesus Christ and his Word will lead to the political well-being of our nation. If one believes that radically God-centered Christians serving as leaders in government will profoundly impact our nation, then one must pray in accordance with that belief, and partner with those who are calling men and women to faith and service in the political realm [Capitol Commission, www.capitolcom.org].

Jesus declared, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:38). The Lord's statement indicates that one's citizenship in this world is not the ultimate aspiration; rather, it is one's heavenly citizenship (a personal, individual salvation). Christianity is not a divine rule that governs all aspects of life, as in Judaism and Islam wherein the political and religious realms coalesce exactly and do so in subjection to the religion's stipulations. Christians are to "render" obedience to Caesar in his realm (Matt 20:20-22; Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-17); however, the "things that are God's" are not possessed by Caesar and can only be given to God. Christ acknowledged the right of civil authorities to assess and collect taxes, and Scripture binds the believer to pay those taxes. However, the Lord did not indicate that civil authorities have ultimate authority with regard to the political and social realms. All things belong to God (Rom 11:36; 2 Cor 5:18; Rev 4:11), which would include the realm in which any earthly leader exercises authority.

SPECIFICS FOR ENGAGING

According to 1 Timothy 2:4 (“who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”), God desires the redemption of political leaders. God’s desire is not only for all humanity to be saved, but also to come to the knowledge of the truth. Elected officials need the biblical faith defending in their midst, and the church (both individually and corporately) bears responsibility to provide that proclamation (Rom 10:14-15). God’s design is also for his church to pray and submit to political leaders.

God has granted a tremendous opportunity to his church not only to “be in subjection to the governing authorities,” but also to fulfill the great commission among those in positions of authority. First Timothy 2:1-4 indicates that the church is to give thanks for those in office and pray and petition God that He would use outreach efforts to grant them repentance and spiritual rebirth, and the result is a tranquil and dignified life under the discernment, authority, and protection of truly born again believers who are indwelt and directed by the Holy Spirit (even more important is the eternal destiny of each leader). As the people of God seek the welfare of the cities in which they live, and pray to the Lord on their behalf, the welfare of those cities will be the welfare of the church (Jer 29:5-7; cf. 1 Pet 2:13-15).

As “ambassadors” of Christ, the church goes into the world proclaiming an eternal message (2 Cor 5:20); and, of course, that message involves a confrontation of sin. Honoring and submitting to government officials does not mean agreeing with unbiblical activities and positions (cf. Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-29; Tit 1:6; 3:1-2) for the church is the “pillar and support of truth” (1 Tim 3:15), which means providing an apologetic for biblical teachings within the political sphere and within all areas where God provides influence. Whether policies are involved or a matter is addressed in public speaking, officials regularly have to respond to issues that the Bible addresses; it is thus incumbent upon the church to equip those leaders with a distinctively Christian perspective, which would involve *evangelizing* those who have not yet experienced a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Rom 1:16) and *establishing* those who desire to mature in their faith and knowledge of Scripture (Col 2:6-7). A distinctively Christian apologetic for government officials is not promoting Judeo-Christian morality and ethics without relating those “symptoms” directly to the Judeo-Christian God (“cause”). Morality (“symptoms”) is not the goal for asserting that a Christian apologetic has been obtained; rather, it should be a catalyst for which to convince and convert officials with the distinctive revelation of the one true God (“cause”). One cannot expect a government official to adopt the principles of Scripture, if that official rejects its Author.

An increasingly common attitude among many is to slander and undermine the character and person of politicians. Everyone has been ensnared into revelry by inappropriate emails, jokes, and photos that discredit the institution of government. Scripture, however, commands the church not to embrace the rebellion of society toward leaders. In Romans 13:1-2, this submission is based upon the fact that God ordains all authorities and therefore government has a legitimate function in God’s economy to administer justice. We must be continually reminded to heed these

words of Scripture because government does not always acknowledge the God who mandates its power and frequently persecutes the church.

Romans 13 also contends that rulers merit respect and are servants of God's will, and are a provision from God to preserve order and punish evildoers. Verses 3-4 reveal that those of integrity have nothing to fear and generally receive commendation from civil authorities. During an era when Caesars and kings were often brutal and tyrannical, Scripture proclaims boldly and correctly that any government is better than none.

Anarchism (Gk. *an*, "without," and *archōn*, "ruler") is the political belief or theory of conduct and life that society should be conceived independent of government. Scripture, however, is unambiguous that God mandates all civil authority, and has given certain responsibilities to those authorities. To resist the state for personal or selfish reasons is to resist God. Contrary to constantly scourging our leaders, the attitude of the church should be to give God thanks that we have a society of law and order that even allows us to participate!

God has always placed servants in positions to engage political leaders (whether Israel or Gentile nations). In the Old Testament, God spoke to kings through prophets who would declare God's word and will to them. The following examples are a mere few among hundreds that demonstrate God's wisdom was bestowed upon leaders. Messages delivered to civil authorities were not contingent upon a positive reception, but always testified to God's character and will.

- JOSEPH ADVISED POTIPHAR, THEN ULTIMATELY PHARAOH (Gen 39—41)
- ISAIAH COUNSELED KING HEZEKIAH AGAINST BRUTAL INVASION OF SENNACHERIB (2 Kgs 19)
- JONAH WARNED THE CITY OF NINEVAH (CAPITAL OF ASSYRIA) AND THE KING (Jon 3)
- DANIEL ADVISED KINGS NEBUCHADNEZZAR, BELSHAZZAR, AND DARIUS (Dan 4—6)
- NEHEMIAH WAS "CUPBEARER TO THE KING" AND SERVED KING ARTAXERXES (Neh 1—2)

As may be expected from a God who never changes (Mal 3:6), very little is different today in how God reaches rulers of nations. God's Word is now complete (Jude 3) and the canon is closed (2 Pet 1:19-21; Rev 22:18), but God still commands the proclamation and teaching of his Word to political leaders. During his earthly ministry, Jesus commissioned "the twelve" to testify of Him to all Israel, which was an audience specified by Jesus to include government officials (Matt 10:18).

Additionally, Jesus warned believers who are alive just prior to his second coming that the world system will deteriorate to a point that believers will be persecuted and even arrested simply for their loyalty to Christ. Jesus foretold this also would be an opportunity to witness to his name (Mark 13:9).

The imperative of delivering the gospel to leaders continues during the church age. Paul was first summoned to preach to kings (political leaders) at his conversion in Acts 9:15, so it is not surprising that his first recorded convert was Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor of Cyprus (Acts 13:6-12). Interestingly, fifteen of the nineteen cities evangelized by the Apostle Paul were capitol cities (or the equivalent of a capitol). The only departure from the original strategy of traveling to capitol cities

was necessary due to persecution (yet even the exceptions prove the rule in regards to evangelizing capitols). He knew capitols were centers where policy was controlled, and boasted a sphere of influence that would help permeate the gospel throughout the empire.

Even in Paul's final ministry venture the Lord sent him in chains testifying to Rome and Caesar (Acts 23:11; 28:14). Paul was such a prestigious prisoner that the palace guard was assigned to protect him. He was cognizant that his presence was to further the gospel (Phil 1:12-13). One may almost discern a celebratory attitude as Paul concluded his prison epistle (Phil 4:21-22).

Paul wrote 1 Timothy in the closing years of his life. Exhorting the young Timothy to continue his legacy of pastoral ministry (and all believers by implication), it is not surprising that Paul once again made an extraordinary plea for reaching political leaders with the gospel (1 Tim 2:1-4). The immediate thing that should seize our attention is the extent of prayer: it must encompass "all men" (2:1). Scripture commands the church to pray first "for kings and all who are in authority" (2:2). Prayer should be universal. Apparently, such prayers were being omitted and were the reason for Paul's corrective. Prayer for all is not irrelevant to the mission of the church (i.e. they do their thing, we do ours, but government and the church are mutually exclusive). The command to pray for all people, and first for political leaders and all those in authority, is followed with a reason that relates to the mission of the church: "so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2:2b-4).

Scripture seems to be saying that peaceful times are conducive to evangelism. While it is true that God has on occasion used persecution and war as an opportunity for the proclamation of the gospel, we must assume that persecution and war are viewed as the exception, not the rule, when God so uses them. The early church, in addition to us in the twenty-first century, may be inclined to regard government as an enemy exclusively, not understanding it in its divinely ordained role. Scripture corrects such thinking. In our own day and time we live in a culture that was once largely influenced by biblical truth, pervasively evidencing biblical values and foundations, and it frustrates many of us as we see the erosion of that; it makes some of us angry, and sometimes our posture and attitude towards the society displays that anger rather frankly. In contrast, Paul called upon believers to have a compassionate, gentle, and peaceable attitude towards rulers and towards the community around us.

Perhaps you have heard the statement, "politics is so filthy that believers should not seek office." Such a proposition would suggest that our nation is better if completely governed by unbelievers. First Timothy 2:1-4, however, states something quite contrary to that assertion! It is evangelistic in tone. "Entreaties" is derived from the Greek word *deēsis*, which is prayer for those who "need" or "lack" something, which in this context is salvation (2:4). The church is to give thanks for those in office and pray and petition God that He would use our outreach efforts to grant them repentance and spiritual rebirth. The result is that we will live tranquil and dignified lives under the discernment, authority, and protection of truly born again believers indwelt and directed by the Holy Spirit. Even more important is the

eternal destiny of each leader! It is a mystery to comprehend why some acknowledge it as dignified for Christians to grow food for the world, doctor the sick, serve in the military, etc., yet not a dignified vocation to propose and execute legislation and policy that impacts and regulates each of these interests. Such a perspective is an unfortunate and illogical misunderstanding of Scripture. While exhorting the church to evangelize and disciple political leaders, the Bible reassures our lives and our nation will be improved if leaders make prayer and the Bible the means of their success. Those who are redeemed are generally more discerning, reverent, and wise models for a country. Atheistic leadership, on the other hand, ultimately brings chaos, indignity, and death to a nation.

The Great Commission includes a specific, and I believe strategic element of emphasis for defending the faith in the political environment. Capitol Commission (www.capitolcom.org), with whom I serve as Georgia State Minister, is an apologetic and missiological response to this mandate, thus we welcome your partnership in this God-specified calling. Capitol Commission is a nationwide ministry committed to reaching capitol communities for Christ, and we gladly encourage and enable the church to participate in the process with us.

God's decree is to providentially install all governing authorities. God alone providentially installs leaders in the realm of government, yet the Lord's desire is to make provision for all government leaders. God's desire is not only for all humanity to be saved, but also to attain "knowledge of the truth." All elected officials can know God's absolute truth because the Lord has revealed in Scripture, the Holy Bible; as the "pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15), the church must defend and proclaim the biblical witness among political leaders, for we cannot truly disciple the nations, if we do not reach its leaders. God's design, therefore, is to pray for all governing authorities. In that regard (consistent with his desire), to submit (give respect) to all government leaders, and to defend the truth of God's Word to our governing authorities, which requires that someone is sent or goes (in the words of Rom 10) to proclaim that inspired message.