

# Pray for Kings - Part 6

by Chip Brogden

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of praying for kings and nations based on biblical principles, such as spiritual justice, criminal justice, civil justice, and social justice.*

**Duration:** 19:54

**Scripture:** Proverbs 29:4

**Topics:** "Secular Authority", "Spiritual Justice"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the biblical framework and reasons behind God's institution of secular authority, emphasizing the importance of spiritual, criminal, civil, and social justice. It discusses the responsibilities of secular authorities to govern in the fear of God, protect the innocent, maintain order, and help the vulnerable. The sermon also addresses the challenges when secular authority abuses power or contradicts spiritual authority, highlighting historical and biblical examples of such conflicts.

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## Transcript

We take these examples in scripture so that we can understand the framework and the reason behind God's institution of secular authority. And it's helpful to go back and look and see why they are there, why they exist, and how they are supposed to behave. So spiritual justice, to govern in the fear of God, criminal justice, to protect the innocent, punish the guilty, and it's a big theme in Proverbs and Psalms that when you do wrong, you should be, people who do wrong should be punished for the wrong that they do.

So when justice is perverted, when people get away with crimes against one another, it represents a failure of secular government. The third thing is civil justice. So you have criminal justice, which is a responsibility of secular government to keep basic law and order in place so that people aren't just randomly committing acts of violence, that there's some kind of a system or some type of a boundary in place that says, this is what we will tolerate.

You go beyond this point, we'll not tolerate it. That's what the commandments, the Mosaic law was all about. It had elements of criminal justice in it, capital punishment.

If you do such and such, then you're going to be punished. And so this establishes some sense of criminal justice in the land. But civil justice is important also for things that are not violent in nature, but you still have to have some type of a check and balance to keep people from cheating, from stealing, from taking advantage of one another.

And so civil justice is important to establish order instead of anarchy. Proverbs 29.4 illustrates this very nicely. Proverbs 29.4. Now all of this is useful because it gives us a framework against which we can pray for kings.

We can evaluate, and again, when I say pray for kings, I'm using this in the scriptural sense that we pray for secular authorities. We're praying for God's purpose and his will concerning the nations. And we begin with those who have the most say-so in what happens in these nations and that is those kings and all who are in authority, who have the most to do with us being able to live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

So civil justice is important. Proverbs 29.4, it says that the king establishes the land by justice, but he who receives bribes overthrows it. So the word establishes there means to make stable, to set in place, to order.

We've already demonstrated a spiritual principle in scripture that says God is not the author of confusion but of order and of peace. When you have order, you have peace. When you have confusion, you don't have peace.

And we've seen that in recent history in the last few years as many nations in the Middle East have had their dictators overthrown. And it's not that we want a dictator in charge, but you do see what happens when you don't have anybody in charge, when there is no civil order at all and there is no secular authority at all, even a dictator is able to keep things under some kind of control and order. I'm not saying a dictatorship is a good government.

I'm saying that bad government is better than no government at all. Because now what we see, of course, good government is better than bad, and we hope for good and we pray for good. But with no government at all, what happens is a vacuum of leadership occurs.

And then whoever runs the country are the ones who have the most weapons and have the most people. And so then it is a power struggle as different groups, different factions try to run the government or try to run the country. And so the result is chaos.

So one of the functions of secular authority is to establish order, not anarchy, but order. So, again, to make stable, to set in place, it says the king establishes the land by justice. So that's important in these nations that they don't have an established government.

They don't have strong government. We just saw recently the collapse of the government in Yemen. So that's just one more example of when you don't have strong secular authority or political authority, you don't have someone that has established order in the land, and then that government collapses, then it opens the door to whoever has the most weapons, whoever has the most bullets.

Now they are in charge. So this is important. The fourth thing, the fourth duty of secular authority is social justice.

Social justice. And as long as we are in Proverbs 29, just look down a few verses down to verse 14. In fact, you can get a lot of good material about secular, religious and spiritual authority from the book of Proverbs.

A lot of good wisdom is in here. But we see social justice is a responsibility of secular authority. In Proverbs 29, 14, it says, The king who judges the poor with truth, his throne will be established forever.

The king who judges the poor with truth, his throne will be established forever. And so scripture teaches and the law of Moses provided for the fact that you're going to have people in every society who are going to need help. Even Jesus acknowledged when he said that the poor you will always have with you.

So although my view of government is conservative, I'm not of the opinion that government shouldn't help the poor. I think that there is a legitimate purpose that government serves by being able to help and to provide for the poor, the unemployed, the needy, the widows. And so I think that's a legitimate function of government to help the poor, the orphans, the elderly, those who can't help themselves, the disabled.

Of course, in what we've seen in my country and in a lot of countries around the world is those programs get bigger and bigger and people who really don't deserve the help get the help. But that doesn't mean that government should not take some kind of responsibility to help the poor and those that are in need. So I would suggest to you these are the four duties of secular authority to the people that they govern.

And this to me, personally, this is one of the things that I use when I'm praying for kings and I'm praying for the nations of this world. And when I'm looking to see what countries, what nations are better aligned with the kingdom of God compared to others, this is one of the things that, one of the criterias, criterions that I'm looking at is these four elements here. Spiritual justice, how well do they govern in the fear of God? Criminal justice, are they able to protect the innocent and punish the guilty? Civil justice, do they have order? Do they have basic human rights, religious freedom, freedom of expression? And social justice, how good of a job are they doing at helping the poor and the orphan and the widow and those that are in need? And with that, those four criteria in place instructs me, based on the word of God, as to what that government needs and how I should pray for the government of that nation.

So that's a guide for you and for the nation that you live in and the nations that you pray for. So these, we've talked about our responsibility to the government from a Christian point of view. This is the responsibility of government to its people from a biblical point of view.

So now let's talk about what happens. Because when we give out these four points, it's very easy to look at what's not going right and to be able to say, well, what you're giving us is a biblical ideal that no one is following. So what do we do when that happens? And this is the title that I promised, the section that I promised titled, When Things Go Wrong.

So I've spent a lot of time giving you the ideal. This is what we're praying for. This is what the Bible says.

This is what God requires of secular authority. Then we look on the news and we see that no one is abiding by scriptural principles. So what do we do when things go wrong? The two most common things that happen when secular authority goes off the tracks, when things go wrong with secular authority.

The first is when secular authority abuses its power. Just like all authority and all power can be corrupted, it can be used in a way that is abusive to people. We've seen so far that God's intention for government is to be a help.

It's to be a blessing. And it's far from a blessing today. It's supposed to govern in the fear of God, make sure that people are protected from crime.

It's supposed to make sure that there is order and peace and stability in the land. And it's also to be able to help those that are not able to help themselves. But we see too many times in the governments of this world today that's not happening.

In fact, government is the biggest problem of these nations. It's been observed, it has been observed, and I agree 100% that the reason we have famine in many parts of the world, it's not because the world doesn't produce enough food. It's not because we're not able to deliver the food to these nations where famines are happening.

It has to do with corrupt government, corrupt leaders, leaders of these governments who enrich themselves at the expense of their citizens. And so that is a good example of secular authority abusing its power lots of ways. A dictatorship.

Obviously, when you have someone who is running the country as a dictator, then he is acting in his own self-interest, ignoring basic human rights, ignoring religious expression, committing genocide and ethnic cleansing as we see going on in North Korea. So that's obviously an abuse of power. How about a democracy where it's not a dictatorship, but the government begins to issue regulations or rules or people begin to vote for things that they're able to legally say, okay, well now we're going to make this okay, when in fact it's not okay, it's not scriptural, it's not moral, and yet the people voted in and the government endorses it.

A monarchy is another example where secular authority can easily be abused because a monarchy is very similar to a dictatorship. Not so much anymore because monarchies are governed a little bit differently these days. They are more democratic than they used to be.

But in the times of the kings of England, there was this principle of what the king called the divine right of kings, and they took these scriptures, these very scriptures that we've been sharing with you about in Romans 13 about submit yourselves to the higher authority and the authorities are there because God placed them there and honor the king and pay your taxes. And so the king naturally, he looked at this and said, well, I'm here by the divine right of God, and so whatever I say goes. And it's kind of similar to what the pope does in his religious authority.

So you see how easily authority can be abused when you begin to think that no one can tell you anything and you have a divine right to decide whatever you want and do whatever you want. So that could definitely lead to an abuse of secular power, and that's one way things go wrong. Another way that things go wrong is when secular authority contradicts spiritual authority.

When secular authority contradicts spiritual authority, and there's lots of examples of this. One example is in Daniel 3, when Nebuchadnezzar passed a decree, a law that says that when the music plays, everyone is to bow down and worship this idol that I made, and the three Hebrew children captives said, no, we're not going to bow down and we're not going to worship your idol. And so they were threatened by the king, and they said, no, we're not going to do it.

And he ordered that they be cast into the fiery furnace. Then the fourth man was there in the midst of the fire, they came out unharmed, and God gave them a great victory over the secular authority that would have killed them. And not too long after that, in Daniel 6, you see another example of secular authority contradicting spiritual authority, when the king makes a law that basically forbids people to pray to anyone but him for 30 days.

So people who don't pray, that's not a problem, but for Daniel, that's a problem, because three times a day he would go into his upper room and he would open the window there and he would pray and intercede to the Lord three times a day facing Jerusalem. So the king passes a law that says, you're not to pray to anyone but me for the next 30 days, and it says when Daniel heard the decree that he went right upstairs, he opened up his window, he bowed down and he prayed to Jerusalem three times a day facing Jerusalem, prayed to the Lord, just as he did before, and so that created a conflict. Well, that was an unjust law.

In Acts chapter 4, there's a similar example of secular authority contradicting spiritual authority. In the case of Acts chapter 4, it was the Sanhedrin who ordered the apostles, Peter and John, to teach and to speak no more in the name of Jesus. And that's when Peter and John were filled with the Holy Spirit and he looked at the authorities that were ordering them to stop teaching in the name of Jesus, and they said, judge for yourselves if we should obey man or obey God, as for us, we cannot help but speak the things that we have seen and heard, and they continued to preach and to teach the name of Jesus in Jerusalem.

Now that was an interesting situation, because in Acts chapter 4, you have the Sanhedrin, which is a combination of religious authority and secular authority, which is always a bad, bad idea. You don't want to see church and state merged together. Listen very carefully to what I'm telling you, because it'll be easily misunderstood and taken out of context.

You don't want church and state to be merged together. Whenever you give religious authority, secular authority, in addition to their religious authority, what's going to happen? As soon as you do something that they disagree with, they have the power to put you in jail. They have the power to call you a heretic and burn you at the stake.

So throughout history, we have seen this over and over and over again. People think the greatest thing in the world would be if church and state came together. And I'm telling you, history teaches us otherwise.

You don't want people in a position where if they disagree with your interpretation of the Bible, or they don't like the way that you teach, or they don't like your belief, or they think that you're a heretic, that they have the power, not just the religious authority, but they have the secular authority to be able to arrest you, to be able to put you in jail, to be able to burn you at the stake because of your belief. That's a gross violation of authority, but the reason it happened is because you allowed this religious authority to get secular authority, and now they have the power to really hurt you and to do something with you. That's been the whole power behind the Crusades and the Inquisition.

It's when church and state come together, and there's that joining together of secular authority and religious authority that always spells problems. In the end of the book, in the end of the Bible, in Revelation, this beast system that rises up out of the earth, it's the exact same thing. It's church and state.

It's religious authority joined together with secular authority, and the result is it comes against those who have the testimony of Jesus. So you have these three areas, these three circles of authority, religious authority, secular authority, and spiritual authority. Spiritual authority drives its power from the Lord.

It's the prophet, the body of Christ, those who walk in true authority, spiritual authority. Religious and secular authority, when they merge together, it always results in persecution against the spiritual authority. So you don't want that.

You want to keep those separated as much as possible. You've been listening to Cross Red, featuring the teaching ministry of Jeff Brogdon. We hope you enjoyed today's broadcast and found it challenging and encouraging.

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