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State's Rights

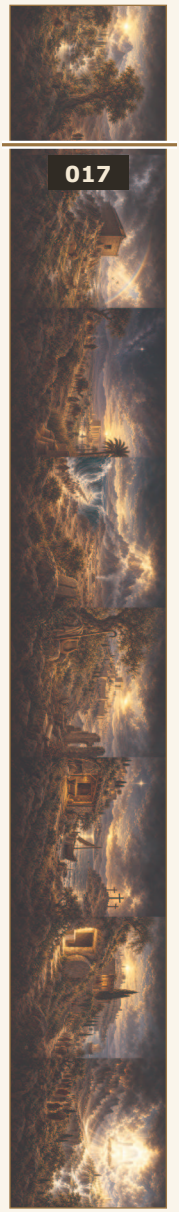
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



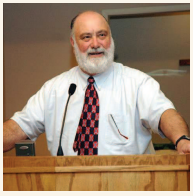
For he is the minister of God to thee for good.

ROMANS 13:4, EXCERPT

Civil authority raises questions of jurisdiction, responsibility, and limits. John Weaver considers the subject of state's rights through biblical principles and historical discussion, asking how claims of government should be examined. These messages invite readers to distinguish rightful responsibility from authority exercised without moral accountability.

"When we talk about states' rights from a biblical perspective, states' rights begin with the biblical principle of limited government."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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State's Rights

Civil Government

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Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

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CHAPTER 1

State's Rights

Part One

Introduction and Purpose

The message I want to bring tonight and tomorrow night is really one message, but I will have to cut it in half. The first half is basically historical. There will be a little Bible tonight, but tomorrow night will be more Bible and some history. Tonight, however, will be mainly historical.

I encourage the teenagers, as well as the adults, to listen, because I can assure you that you will hear things tonight that you have never heard in your schools. Unhappily, we are ignorant of our history, ignorant of our heritage, and ignorant of our Bibles. Consequently, we have been bamboozled down through the years.

The Importance of a Biblical Worldview

As you open your Bibles to Romans chapter 13, I want to say that I was really thrilled to hear that you have a Christian worldview Sunday school class. Most people do not understand how important

that really is. You have to look at things either through the spectacles of the Word of God or through the spectacles of the world; there is no other alternative. Once you learn to look at things through the Word of God, you will find out what reality really is, because God determines reality, not the world.

Reading Romans 13:1-4

We need to have a biblical view not only of economics—I would really love to deal with that all week—but also a biblical worldview of education, the ministry, government, and the family. In other words, God speaks on every one of these subjects. Tonight, tomorrow night, and perhaps one or two other nights, I will be dealing in part with the Bible and civil government. I want you to understand that God gives us the answers. We are the ones who refuse to hearken and refuse to listen. But if we begin to hear what God says and apply the truth, then our problems will be worked out.

Romans chapter 13, verses 1 through 4: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”

"For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

States' Rights as Antidote to Federal Tyranny

What in the world does the Bible say about a subject that you and I have heard all of our lives, the subject of states' rights? Have you ever thought about that? What do states' rights have to do with what we're facing today? Let me tell you that states' rights, historically—and I'm going to point out tomorrow night that they are also biblically—are an antidote to federal tyranny.

Without states' rights, the states are basically nothing more than feudal servants or slaves, working on the federal plantation. Let me illustrate this by giving you something that I heard in 1999. It was during the month of August, and I was listening to the news when I heard a U.S. District Attorney from California make this statement: "Federal law is superior to state law."

When he said that, I did a double take. I said, "What?" Remember, he said federal law is superior to state law. If that statement is true, then all fifty states are nothing more than servants and the federal government is the master. If that is true, there is absolutely no way that any state may protect its citizens. No state can fight unfunded mandates or any mandates. It cannot make laws that would protect its citizens, nor can it make laws that would contradict federal law. In other words, the federal government would be supreme and sovereign, the ruler over everything. Whenever the federal government spoke, the states would simply have to jump—and that means the people in the states as well.

The only conclusion I can come to, based upon what that U.S. district attorney said, is this: he is absolutely, totally ignorant of history, the Constitution, and the Bible.

Moreover, he does not understand why the first war of independence was fought, nor does he understand why the second war, from 1861 to 1865, for independence was fought either. If his statement is true, it is only true because we have been transformed from a constitutional republic into a federal empire, and we have progressed further down the road of slavery than any of us ever realized. So, in order to understand the predicament that we're in in this country, we've got to understand it both historically and biblically as well.

Historical Foundation: Articles of Confederation and Treaty of Paris

I am going to deal primarily with the historical part and then tie it together tomorrow night, showing that what our Founding Fathers said was biblical and scriptural to the nth degree.

When our country first began, we had what was known as the Articles of Confederation. They were drawn up in 1781, and Article II makes this statement: "Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled."

Notice what the Articles of Confederation said. Each state had its own sovereignty, freedom, and independence, its own power and jurisdiction. The only thing the states gave up was a little power to the federal government as such.

The war for independence ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1783. George III, King of England, when he made peace with the United States, made peace with thirteen separate sovereign states. The opening of the Treaty of Paris says: "His Britannic Majesty acknowledges the said United States, in other words, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, to be free and sovereign and independent states and that he treats with them as such, as for himself, his heirs and successors, relinquishes all claims to the government, property, and territorial rights, of the same in every part thereof."

Thus, George III acknowledged all thirteen states, naming them individually, as free, sovereign, and independent states, and made peace with each of them. When the Constitutional Convention met, Georgia sent a delegation carrying a commission that opened with these words: "The state of Georgia, by the grace of God, free, sovereign, and independent." When the United States Constitution was written, the states came together and agreed to create what we know as the federal government. They gave the federal government certain limited power and authority.

The States Created the Federal Government

Please understand this very important principle: The federal government did not create the states; the states created the federal government. They created it to be federal, not national, and there is a big difference between the two. The federal government created

and authorized by the states was to act solely as their agent. The states were the real sovereigns with the real power, and the federal government was to do only those things delegated to it by the states.

The right to decide whether the federal government did or did not act according to the Compact, that is, the Constitution, belonged to the states alone, who were the true sovereigns. It did not belong to the federal government. If you allow the federal government to determine its own limitations, guess what? It will not have any. That is like coming up to me and saying, "Pastor Weaver, I owe you some money. How much do I owe you?" If the federal government determines its own limitations, it will have unlimited power. It will be tyrannical and despotic.

State Reservations and the Right to Resume Powers

When the Constitution of the United States was acceded to by the states, several states understood that things might get out of hand and wanted a disclaimer. When New York acceded to the Constitution on July the 26th, 1788, it added these words: "that the powers of government may be resumed by the people whensoever it shall become necessary to their happiness." New York was saying that whenever the people wanted to reassume those powers, they might do so. Virginia did exactly the same thing on June 25, 1788, when it acceded to the Constitution. It added these words: "the powers granted under the Constitution being derived from the people of the United States may be resumed by them whensoever the same shall be perverted to their injury or oppression and that every power not granted thereby remains with them at their will."

Virginia said that any time the Constitution gets perverted, there is oppression, or there is anything they do not like, they may reassume, or take back, the power given to the federal government.

To understand the sovereignty and independence of each state, consider this fact: when the Constitution of the United States was ratified in 1787, only eleven of the original thirteen states ratified it immediately. North Carolina and Rhode Island did not ratify the Constitution right away. The Constitution was not forced upon them. It was not considered a matter of majority rule. The other states did not say, "Well, tough luck. We all agreed, and we are the majority;

you are in whether you like it or not." North Carolina and Rhode Island were treated by the other states as sovereign, separate nations, because that is basically what they were. When they did not immediately join and accede to the Constitution, there was no war to force them to join the Union. None. Why?

Because each state realized that it had its own sovereignty and independence, and could do what it wanted to do. When, over a year later, North Carolina and Rhode Island did accede to the Constitution, Rhode Island added these words: "We, the delegates of the people of Rhode Island and plantations, duly elected, do declare and make known that the powers of government may be resumed by the people, whensoever it shall become necessary to their happiness." If it became necessary to the people's happiness, they could resume and take away the power given to the federal government.

A number of the original states delineated their right to take back what they had delegated to the federal government. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison wrote what are known as the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions. These resolutions gave us the classic statement of states' rights. They basically tell us that the Union is a voluntary association of the states, and if the central or federal government goes too far and does anything illegal or unconstitutional, the states have the right to nullify or abrogate that law. Thomas Jefferson wrote: "Resolved that the several states comprising the United States of America are not united on the principle of unlimited submission to their general government."

Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions and Nullification

Thomas Jefferson declared:

"Resolved that the several states composing the United States of America are not united on the principle of unlimited submission to their general government, but that by compact, under the style and title of the Constitution for the United States and of the amendments thereto, they constituted a general government for special purposes, delegated to that government certain defined powers, reserving each state to itself the residuary mass of rights to their own self-government, and that, whensoever the general government

assumes undelegated powers, its acts are unauthoritative, void, and of no force, that to this compact each state acceded as a state and is as an integral party, its co-states forming as to itself the other party. Each party has an equal right to judge for itself as well of infractions as the mode and measures of redress."

Thomas Jefferson said that the parties to this compact, this Constitution, were each state and each of the other states. The federal government was not a party to the compact. Jefferson went on to say that whenever the federal government goes over and beyond the Constitution, its acts are unauthoritative, void, and of no force. He also said that each party—that is, each state—has an equal right to judge for itself as well of infractions as of the mode and measure of redress.

If the federal government passed an unconstitutional law, South Carolina might say, “What we're going to do is slap them on the back of the hand, reprimand them, and tell them we're not going to put up with this anymore.” Georgia might say, “We're going to call out the militia.” It was up to each state how it redressed the grievance; not all the states had to agree on the exact same measure.

That does not mean there was going to be an open fight all the time. It was showing the power of each state. South Carolina applied this principle to the tariffs of abomination—the tariffs of 1828 and 1832. Our tariffs, our taxes, are bad and high, but back then they wanted to raise some tariffs 50 and 60 percent. Primarily, it would be the South paying those taxes.

South Carolina therefore drew up an ordinance of nullification, nullifying those laws because they were unconstitutional. The Ordinance of Nullification said: “We, therefore, the people of the state of South Carolina, in convention assembled, do declare and ordain that these acts, that is, those tariffs, are unauthorized by the Constitution of the United States and violate the true meaning and intent thereof, and are null, void, and no law, nor binding upon this State, its officers, or citizens, and all promises, contracts, and obligations made or entered into, or to be made and entered into, with purpose to secure duties imposed by these said acts, and all judicial proceedings which shall be hereafter had in affirmance

thereof, are and shall be utterly null and void." South Carolina said, "These tariffs are unconstitutional."

That was South Carolina. There was not going to be any party coming down to bind the officers or citizens of the state to these laws because they were unconstitutional. The ordinance went on to say that it did not matter what the courts said: "and all judicial proceedings which shall be hereafter had in affirmance thereof are and shall be utterly null and void." In other words, South Carolina would not recognize the laws even if the Supreme Court said they were valid.

The concluding paragraph declared: "And we, the people of South Carolina, to the end, that it may be fully understood by the government of the United States and the people of the co-states, that we are determined to maintain this, our ordinance and declaration, at every hazard, do further declare that we will not submit to the application of force on the part of the federal government to reduce this state to obedience."

South Carolina was saying that if the federal government sent down its army, the state still would not submit; the use of force would not make it submit. It further declared, "but that we will consider the passage by Congress of any act to coerce this state, shut up her ports, destroy or harass her commerce, or to enforce the acts hereby declared to be null and void otherwise than through the civil tribunals of the country as inconsistent with the longer continuance of South Carolina in the Union and that the people of this state will henceforth hold themselves absolved from all further obligation to maintain or preserve their political connection with the people of the other states, and will forthwith proceed to organize a separate government and do all other acts and things which sovereign and independent states may have a right to."

This was in the 1830s, not the 1860s. South Carolina said that if the federal government tried to coerce or force the state, it would withdraw from the Union, separate, and establish its own government, because it was a free, sovereign, independent state with the right to do so.

Constitutional Interpretation: Madison and the 9th/10th Amendments

Now you have to ask yourself this question: Did South Carolina misinterpret the Constitution? The answer is no. James Madison is called the father of the Constitution because he was secretary at the Constitutional Convention. He wrote down everything, had everything in writing, and knew what was said and what was not said, including the intent behind it. In Federalist Paper number 45, he said this:

"The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few and defined. Those which remain in the state governments are numerous and indefinite. The former, that is the federal government, will be exercised principally on external objects as war, peace, negotiation, and foreign commerce, with which last the power of taxation will for the most part be connected, that is foreign commerce. The powers reserved over several states will extend to all the objects which in the ordinary course of affairs concern the lives, liberties, and properties of the people and the internal order, improvement, and prosperity of the state."

What did James Madison say? He said you do not have to worry, because the federal government has been given few and limited power. The great majority of the power resides with the states. It will be the states that dictate to the people, because the people control the states; therefore, the people will be running the state and determining their own improvements and everything else they want to do, not the federal government.

Those of you who have studied the Constitution know that the Ninth and Tenth Amendments clearly make this plain. If I were to ask you what the first ten amendments are called, most of you would tell me the Bill of Rights. Yes, we have some rights enumerated in the Constitution. But listen to what the Ninth Amendment says: "The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people." We have far more rights than those listed in those ten amendments. Just because ten are listed does not mean that is all we have.

We have a whole lot more. Then the Tenth Amendment says: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution nor prohibited by it to the states are reserved to the states respectively or to the people." The Tenth Amendment makes it very plain: We have given you a little power, and that is it. The rest of it goes to the states.

Jeff Davis used this argument concerning the equality of the states. When the abolitionists did not want the southern states taking their slaves into the western territories, they were basically not trying to abolish slavery but to control the situation. Davis responded that southern men had fought for those territories and southern money had helped finance them. Southerners, he argued, had the same right to go there and carry whomever they wanted, just as the abolitionists did.

Here was his argument: “Resolved that the union of these states rests on an equality of rights and privileges among its members. And that it is especially the duty of the Senate, which represents the states in their sovereign capacity to resist all attempts to discriminate either in relation to personal property, so as in the territories, which are the common possessions of the United States, to give advantages to the citizens of one state which are not equally secured to those of every other state.”

You cannot give special privileges to one state or group of states while denying those same privileges to others. The states are equally the party in the Constitution, and it is therefore unconstitutional to do that.

Many of you have heard me speak, as well as other men, of James Henley Thornwell. He was a Presbyterian pastor, author, and theologian, and died in 1862, after the war had been going on for basically a year. He wrote a little tract called “Our Danger and Our Duty,” in which he showed considerable foresight. What he wrote really hit the nail on the head:

“If they prevail”—speaking of the radical Republicans, the abolitionists, and the northern states—“the whole character of a government will be changed. And instead of a federal republic, the common agent of sovereign and independent states, we shall have a central despotism with the notion of the states forever abolished,

deriving its powers from the will and shaping its policy according to the wishes of a numerical majority of the people."

"We shall have, in other words, a supreme, irresistible democracy. The avowed end of this present war is to make the government a government of force." I find it interesting that he said that if they prevailed, they would change the very nature of our government, changing it from a constitutional republic into something entirely different: a supreme democracy where the majority rules over and tramples the minority. The avowed end of the war, he said, was to make the government a government of force.

Has that come to pass? Most definitely it has. It is interesting to read what other countries wrote about the war and about America. I have received a new book containing most of the articles that England wrote while observing the war and the United States at that time. Most people then understood that this government was established with the states as the masters and the federal government as the servant. Alexis de Tocqueville, in Democracy in America, made the same observation: we were a union of states; the states had the power, and the federal government was the servant. That was widely understood, especially in the South.

One of the many problems between the North and the South was this: the South wanted a strict construction, a strict understanding, of the Constitution, while the North said, "No, we'll interpret it any way we want to." The South replied, "You can't do that." We were parties to this compact. There is a right way and a wrong way to interpret it.

When the South seceded and the Confederate Constitution was written, its preamble opened with these words: "We the people of the Confederate States, each state acting in its sovereign and independent character." The southern, or Confederate, states intended to preserve state sovereignty, while the North was trying to destroy it.

Now consider what is happening in our day. A number of politicians have given lip service to states' rights without understanding the principle or knowing how to apply it. In 1980, on the opening day of President Ronald Reagan's presidential

campaign, he said he stood for states' rights. That same day, at the same meeting, your now deceased Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina said, "We want the federal government to keep their filthy hands off the rights of the states."

Words fitly spoken without understanding or application are useless. What am I trying to say? It is very easy to talk about states' rights. It is very easy to talk about independence. Until you begin to make application of it, you begin to see: if we apply this principle, then this has to go, and this has to go, and that has to change, and this has to change.

The Compact Theory and John C. Calhoun

And all of a sudden, we are not ready for change; we do not want it. Now John C. Calhoun, who was from South Carolina, by the way, who was known as that iron clad southerner, gave a Fort Hill address on July the 26th, 1831. This is the error in our modern day thinking. Calhoun said, "The error is in the assumption that the general or the federal government is a party to the constitutional compact. The states, as it has been shown, form the compact acting as sovereign and independent communities."

What does that mean? It means the federal government was not a party to the compact. It was over here.

If Mr. Wilson and I enter into a compact, a covenant, or an agreement, and all of a sudden Ted comes over and says, "Now you should do this, and you should do it like this," we would look at Ted and say, "Who are you? You do not have anything to do with this covenant. You do not have anything to do with this compact. You just stay out of our business."

If the states are the parties to the compact, the federal government is not a party to it. The states created the federal government, so they have the right to tell it what it can do and what it cannot do.

John C. Calhoun went on to say: "The great and leading principle is that the general government emanated from the people of the several states, forming distinct political communities, and acting in

their separate and sovereign capacity, and not from all the people forming one aggregate political community."

Listen to what he said. The way our government came about was that the states came together. This is very important. He says it did not come "from all the people forming one aggregate political community." What in the world is he saying? Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and Abraham Lincoln said that the nation preceded the states, and that the people were the United States before the states ever came into existence.

No, Calhoun said, that is hooey. He was fighting against that false interpretation. It was not one great big aggregate political community; it was the states that came together. He continued: "and they came together and formed the Constitution of the United States, which is in fact a compact to which each state is a party, and the character already described, and that the several states or parties have a right to judge of its infractions, and in case of deliberate, palpable, and dangerous exercise of power, not delegated, they have a right in the last resort to use the language of Virginia resolutions to interpose for arresting the progress of evil and maintaining with their respective limits, the authorities, rights and liberties appertaining to them."

The states are supposed to be the protector of our rights. That is the way it was set up. When the federal government passes an unconstitutional law or does something that will harm the people of the states, the states are to interpose. They are to step in between and say, "Oh, you're not going to do that to our citizens. You're not going to do that to our people." The states have a right to interpose themselves. This right of interposition, thus solemnly asserted by the state of Virginia, may be called states' rights, vetoed, nullification, or by any other name.

"I conceive it to be the fundamental principle of our system, resting on historical facts." In the same address, John C. Calhoun nailed it down with these words: "Stripped of all of its coverings, the naked question is whether ours is a federal or a consolidated government, a constitutional government or an absolute one, a government resting ultimately on the solid basis of the sovereignty of the states or on the unrestrained will of a majority. A form of

government, as in all other unlimited ones, in which injustice and violence and force must finally prevail." And then he says, "Let it never be forgotten that where the majority rules without restriction, the minority is always the subject."

Here is the question: Do we have a federal government or a consolidated one? Do we have a constitutional republic or an absolute government? How the states exercise their right of interposition was up to the states. They cannot delegate this right without surrendering their entire sovereignty.

Modern Consequences and Call to Return

If the states can no longer say, "Hold, wait, stop, you're not going to do this," then the states are not sovereign; the states are servants. We're all servants, working men on the federal plantation.

When one forgets this simple truth, which we have forgotten in this country, we have what we presently endure: a federal government completely out of control, with usurped unlimited power, demanding a usurped and unlimited submission by the citizens to its every whim, every rule, and every regulation. If you look in Washington, D.C., and unhappily sometimes in a lot of the state capitals now, you will find what nearly three to five hundred thousand Southern soldiers died to prevent.

In 1855, Senator Benjamin F. Wade from Ohio was a notorious hater of the South. He had no love of the South whatsoever. But Benjamin F. Wade at least understood one thing, and he said this in a speech before the United States Senate: "Who is the judge of last resort of the violation of the Constitution of the United States by the enactment of law?"

Think about what he just asked. Who is the judge of last resort as to whether or not the Constitution has been violated by an enactment of law? He went on: "Who is the final arbiter? The general government or the states in their sovereignty. Why, sir, to yield that point is to yield up all the rights of the states to protect their own citizens and to consolidate this government into a miserable despotism."

Benjamin F. Wade said that if the government can determine whether or not it acts constitutional, the states are nothing. We have a tyrant, and we're working on the plantation. Is the Supreme Court the determiner of what is constitutional and what is not constitutional? You've been told that. Is Congress the determiner? Is the executive office the determiner?

If you leave the right to determine what is and is not constitutional with the federal government, that's like leaving it the right to define its own powers and its own authority. No, it comes back to the states, and it comes back to the people. The Constitution of the United States was never devised to establish a centralized government. Ordained by the states, it was never intended to abolish, replace, or destroy the states and their fundamental rights. Moreover, it was not designed to create a legal system that would allow the federal government to slowly and gradually usurp authority and consolidate all that power and authority in Washington.

The Constitution was not designed for that. Was it not Jefferson who said, "Bind them down with the chains of the Constitution"? Thomas Jefferson said in 1821, "When all government, domestic and foreign, in little as in great things shall be drawn to Washington as the center of all power, it will render powerless the checks provided of one government on another and will become as venal and as oppressive as the government from which we separated." When all power is drawn to Washington in little and great things, in foreign and domestic matters, it will become as venal and oppressive as the government from which we separated, George III of England.

In his inaugural address, Jefferson asked what this country needed and answered that it needed a wise and frugal government, one that would restrain men from injuring each other but otherwise leave them free to their own pursuits. He then asked how this was to be obtained. We needed to avoid entangling alliances; preserve the rights of election, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and the right to trial by jury; and, most importantly, "support the state governments in all their rights as the most competent administration for our domestic concern and the surest bulwarks of our liberty."

When the states lose their sovereignty and independence, we have lost our liberty. Jefferson said it plainly: states' rights are the bulwark of our liberties. The loss of states' rights equals the loss of our liberties.

Our founding fathers were patriots who loved their country. They were not nationalists who loved their government. In a letter Jefferson wrote to Tracey in 1811, he said again, "The true bulwarks of our liberty in this country are our state governments." These men could not envision the states allowing the federal government to intrude and steal their sovereignty and independence.

States' rights are indeed a bulwark of liberty. Samuel Adams wrote to Richard Henry Lee, father of Robert E. Lee, that he feared a misinterpretation of the Constitution would bring about a fully centralized or consolidated federal government at the expense of the states and sink both into despotism.

Have you wondered what has happened in our country? Has it bugged you? Has it bothered you? Maybe I am the only one who thinks like this. What in the world is happening? How can we allow politicians to get away with what they did? Did you know that 38 of our congressmen voted against making English the official language of this country? My question is, what language do they want? Chinese? Russian? If they do not want English, they want some language. How is it that we allow things like this to happen?

Look in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes, chapter 10, and look at verse 7. Solomon said, "I have seen servants upon horses and princes walking as servants upon the earth." That is exactly where we are today. It is reversed. The princes ought to be riding, and the servants ought to be walking.

Do you know what has happened in this country? The reason we have lost our liberty and freedom is because our state legislators do not have the backbone, knowledge, constitutionalism, and conviction to stand on their own two feet and look at the federal government and say, "You are our servant. You do not tell us what to do. We tell you what to do." Our servant has become our master. Our servant is now riding upon a horse that we provided and trampling us into the ground. Solomon said something is wrong.

You ought to read Psalm 82. I am not going to preach on that tonight, but there God talks about having the world basically turned upside down. Psalm 82 is a psalm against the magistrates, a psalm against the judges. When things are not done righteously and justly, everything is turned upside down.

Alexander Hamilton, in Federalist No. 33, on January 3, 1788, said: "If the federal government should overpass its just bounds of authority and make a tyrannical use of its powers, the people whose creature it is must appeal to the standard that they have formed and take such measures to redress the injury done to the Constitution as the exigency may suggest and prove it justified." If the federal government does go beyond the Constitution, what is it? The people, he said, who created it must come along and say, "No, no, no."

We will not allow this. We will not have this happening. You say, "Come on, Brother Weaver, that's just never been done." Oh, yes, it has been done. One of my favorite court cases is Chisholm v. Georgia. It was a 1793 case. A fellow in South Carolina thought that the state of Georgia owed him some money. Mr. Chisholm went to the Supreme Court of the United States and said, "The state of Georgia owes me some money, and I want to sue the state of Georgia."

The Supreme Court sent word to Georgia: "There's a suit up here against you, and you need to come up here and defend yourselves in this suit. We expect you here because the hearing will be such and such date." The state of Georgia said to the Supreme Court of the United States—now I am paraphrasing this—"Kiss my foot." What Georgia said was, "You are our servant, not our master. You do not tell us what to do; we tell you what to do. If you think the state of Georgia is coming up to Washington, D.C., you are mistaken."

The Supreme Court sent word, "Fine, you do not have to appear. We will have the hearing without you and issue our decision whether you are here or not." The Georgia House of Representatives then went into session and passed a bill making it a felony punishable by hanging for any person to enter Georgia to carry out the edicts of the Supreme Court, saying they would be hanged immediately without the benefit of clergy. Guess what happened? The Eleventh Amendment was passed, which stopped all of that.

They said, “No, no, not anymore.” The people of Georgia back then said, “We’re not going to allow that. We are not going to have that.” What has happened in this country? The servant has become the master, and the master has become the servant. How in the world did this come about? You could say it came about by fraud, apathy, ignorance, subterfuge, deceit, and manipulation, and I’m sure all of those are part of the answer.

However, I believe Alexis de Tocqueville took the hammer and hit the nail right on the head when he said, “The American Republic will endure until politicians realize they can bribe the people with their own money.” Folks, let me tell you something. We, as a people in this country, have become so indolent, so lazy, so selfish, and so irresponsible in our lives that we want to live off the labor and discipline of others.

It is bad to listen to the news these days. Whether you agree with Bush or not is immaterial right now, but Bush is making a tour of Latin American countries, and I heard that, down in Guatemala, they’re protesting him because that America has forgotten them. What? Are we responsible to take care of the people of Guatemala? Are we responsible to take care of the people of China? Are we responsible to take care of the people of Russia? Who are we responsible to take care of? Let’s be honest. We have become, and the world has become, so indolent and lazy that we do not have a biblical work ethic. We will not take care of ourselves.

We will not plan for our future. We will not do anything. We want the federal government to take care of us, and if they don’t, we expect the state government to. The truth of the matter is this: listen to any federal judge when he is being challenged and shown laws where numerous things are unconstitutional and illegal. Do you know what the attitude of most judges is? Usually, “Well, I’m not going to be the one to bring down the system.”

We are so fearful of change. Because we don’t want to change, we are willing to accept bad government. Someone says, “Well, Brother Weaver, you know, the government provides this and they provide that.” You’ve got to remember, folks, they can’t give you what they do not take from someone else. There is no such thing as a free lunch.

Somebody somewhere pays, period. Somebody pays. But you say, "Well, look, if we try to change now, just think what would happen."

"There would be anarchy." No, there would not be anarchy. Listen to what Richard Henry Lee said: "To say that a bad government must be established for fear of anarchy is really saying that we should kill ourselves for fear of dying."

There is a verse in Jeremiah, chapter six, where God says that we are to go back to the old paths and stand in the old ways, because those were the ways of righteousness. You know what this country needs to go back to, folks? We need to go back to God's righteousness, back to the Bible, back to the foundation, back to Jesus Christ, back to the Constitution, and back to the biblical work ethic.

We need to learn to take care of ourselves and our families. When we realize that it is not the responsibility of government or anyone else to take care of us, but our responsibility, and we start doing something about it, things are going to start changing. Folks, let me tell you: we have so much tyranny in this country, and I am going to bring out a quote tomorrow that is unbelievable.

You would not think that someone would have had the foresight to say it, but he did. We have so much tyranny in this country without even realizing it. Can you imagine the executive orders, the signing papers, and all the things that are going on in this country to steal our liberties? Most of the time, we do not even know it. Nobody has been upset with the Patriot Act except those people against whom it has been used. Nobody has been upset with Homeland Security except those people who have been thrown into jail and imprisoned and shot needlessly. Yes, it upsets them.

I travel a lot, and I have to pray for grace. My wife and I were at the airport in California getting ready to fly home. Here was a little woman in her eighties and her husband in his eighties, and they were going through this metal detector. This little old man was walking like this, and they wanted to strip-search him. I said, "Come on, give him a knife; I'll take it away from him."

We have lost our mind. There was a little nun in her habit; she had to be in her seventies, and I will guarantee you, I could have

blown her over. She could not have weighed eighty-five pounds soaking wet, and they were patting her down. But you let those who really look like terrorists go, and they will not pat them down because that is racial profiling.

Have we gone crazy in this country? We've lost our mind, our moorings, and our foundation. If we do not return to a biblical view and learn to see government biblically as well as historically—if we do not learn to see every aspect and area of life through the eyes of the Word of God—we are going to get in deeper and deeper trouble.

I like what Steve Wilkins said: "The war was over in 1865. They did not destroy slavery; they just merely enlarged the plantation. Now we're all slaves." You may resent that, but if you don't jump when they say jump, you'll find out who owns your property and who doesn't, who controls your life and who doesn't. If you don't have your papers in order, you'll find out very quickly who's in control.

And it is not we, the people, nor is it today the Word of God, because people laugh at the Word of God. Did you know there is a new Bible coming out that combines our Bible, the Buddhist scriptures, and the Hindu scriptures, and says that Jesus Christ was the son of Mary and a gorilla? How can something like that happen in this country? Go up I-75, travel all the way north, and look at all the Muslim temples. I don't mean their little tiny buildings; their spires are bigger than this building.

What is happening? We've lost our foundation. When we don't know what the Bible teaches and what God demands, and we don't know what our Constitution is, we are in trouble. Most of us have never read the Constitution all the way through one time. Some of us have never even read our Bible all the way through one time.

Lord, have mercy; how ignorant we are of history. All I am saying, folks, is that we need to come back to where we should be: bowing at the feet of Jesus Christ and saying, "Your Word is true in every area"—government, economics, education, family, and home. It does not matter; His Word is truth, for Jesus Christ is truth.

Father, we are thankful today for Your love and Your Word, and for the history You have given us. We know and understand that history is nothing less than Your eternal decrees coming to pass in

time. Help us to learn, to understand, and to see from where we have fallen, so that we may at least find our way back. Give us, Lord, grace to serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

State's Rights

Part Two

Romans 13:1–4 says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive of themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid. For he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

Last night, I tried to deal with the historical aspect of states' rights. Historically speaking, it was the states, or more particularly, the people of the states, that came together and created what we know as the federal government. There is so much documentation, and I gave you a great deal of it last night, that it does not need to be repeated. History is indeed important. Before you ever begin disdaining history, remember that history is nothing less than God's eternal decrees coming to pass in time.

Introduction: The Importance of History and the Bible

The Bible says in Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things which He reveals belong to us and our children that we may do them." We do not know what God's secretive will is until God brings it to pass in time. Then we know it as history.

As important as history was for our founding fathers, there was another document that was even more important: the Bible. Many of you have heard David Barton in his video "America's Godly Heritage." Speaking of Donald Lutz and Charles Hyneman, he states, "Donald Lutz and Charles Hyneman reviewed an estimated 15,000 items with explicit political content printed between 1760 and 1805. And from these items they identified 3,154 references to other sources."

The source the Founding Fathers most often quoted was the Bible, accounting for 34% of all citations. Sixty percent of all quotes came from men who used the Bible to form their conclusions. That means 94% of all the quotes by the Founding Fathers were based upon the Bible. The Founding Fathers took ideas from the Bible and incorporated them into our government. Interestingly, the book they most usually quoted from was Deuteronomy, which, of course, is the book of law.

When we consider states' rights, we must consider them not simply from a historical perspective, but from a biblical perspective as well. In order to understand this biblically, we must understand that a state, in the strictest sense of the word, is not a biblical entity. To understand states' rights, we have to understand individual rights. Who comprises a state? Who forms a state? The citizens—the people. Without people or citizens, you do not have a state.

States' Rights Rooted in Individual Rights

God ordained and created three very basic institutions, and only three. He created the family, which is a ministry of education; the church, which is a ministry of grace; and what I would call the state, or civil government, which is a ministry of justice. But since God has

ordained civil government, that does not mean a state was therefore created and given certain rights. No, it is the people who were created by God, the people who were given these rights, and the people who came together and formed the states.

When individuals came together to form a government, corporate rights existed only because a group of individuals had come together. Do corporate rights, then, stem from individual rights? From where do people derive their rights? The answer is from God and God alone. Government cannot give rights; government does not have any rights to give. According not only to the Bible but also to our historical documents, it is the government's position to secure these rights.

Most of you can quote from the Declaration of Independence when it says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." Notice what the Declaration said: to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men. The purpose of government, according to the Declaration, is to secure our rights. The Declaration went on to say, "deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

That's a very interesting statement. Every negative has a positive, and every positive has a negative. If government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed, then where does it derive its unjust powers? Through usurpation and theft, not from the consent of those over whom they are ruling. Anytime we give consent, it would be a just power. When we do not give our consent, it would be an unjust power.

Biblical Illustration: Israel as Twelve States

Let me explain the concept of states' rights by referring you to a biblical illustration. Every one of us understands Israel. There were twelve tribes that made up the nation. Israel was simply twelve states joined together under the constitution, or compact, of God's law. Each tribe, or state, had its own flag, its own princes, and its

own rulers. Thus, twelve equal states came together under the constitution of God's law. What one state or tribe did was not necessarily binding upon the other tribes. What Issachar did did not bind Manasseh; what Manasseh did did not bind Judah, because each had its own separate government. But that government was under the constitution of the law of God.

When you say, “Here’s the tribe,” that is true. But you have to understand that it is the people who make up the tribe, just as it is the people who make up the state. Without the people, there would be no states. We must remember what I emphasized last night: the states created the federal government; the federal government did not create the states. Even today, the federal government cannot make a state. It may admit one to the Union, but it cannot make a state. Only the people coming together can do that.

States’ rights, then, truly translate into individual rights, family rights, ecclesiastical rights, and finally corporate rights. By corporate rights, I mean the right of the people to freely assemble and to create and control their government. We have inalienable rights given to us by our Creator. I believe that, first and foremost, one of our most important rights is simply the right to be left alone—the right to tell government to butt out of our business.

Limited Government as a Biblical Principle

When we talk about states’ rights from a biblical perspective, states’ rights begin with the biblical principle of limited government. Each of us has heard the adage that the government that governs least governs best. According to Scripture, that is a very accurate statement. Why? Because the only authority God gave civil government is the authority to execute justice.

Romans 13:3–4 says, “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

According to the Word of God, God has limited civil government to a ministry of justice. In that limitation are two sides of one coin: God has given civil government authority, first, to punish the wicked, and second, to protect the righteous. It is just that simple.

When we talk about the Constitution of the United States, we must remember that it is referred to either as a limited powers document or an express powers document. A limited powers document means that the only power the federal government has is that which the Constitution limits to the federal government. An express powers document means the same thing in another way: the only power the federal government has is that which is expressed in the Constitution. Therefore, whenever the federal government goes over and beyond its constitutional limits, it is usurpation, theft, and tyranny.

We use the term limited government. What does that really mean? Most commonly, it refers to a government whose functions are restricted, prescribed, and limited by law. What is the law that limits or prescribes the limits for our government? It is the Constitution. All you have to do is go to Article 6, Paragraph 3: This Constitution is to be the supreme law of the land, and all governmental officials and judges are to be bound thereby.

When we talk about a limited government, it means government does not have all power. It is limited by the law, by the document. Please remember this: The Constitution of the United States was not written to limit the people or the states. It was written to limit the federal government.

Do you realize that when God ordained government, He gave it as a ministry of justice? God never ordained government to be an educational ministry. He never ordained government to be a welfare ministry. He never ordained government to be a religious ministry in the fact that it runs the churches and tells the churches what to do, how to report, and what kind of forms to file. No. All God did was give government what? A ministry of justice.

Usurpation and Tyranny

When government goes over and beyond the Constitution, it is usurpation, theft, and tyranny. Some would say, “Brother Weaver, that’s being hard.” No, that’s not being hard. That’s being truthful.

Alexander Hamilton wrote many warnings against the usurpation of the Constitution. He said that whenever the public, or the people, permitted the public service to flout the people’s mandates—that is, to flout the Constitution—certain traits were involved. Referring to the state constitution of New York, he wrote in 1784 that public servants who defied the Constitution committed “a treasonable usurpation upon the power and the majesty of the people.”

Notice what he said: “a treasonable usurpation of the power and the majesty of the people.” How could he say that? First of all, the power came from the people. Remember, the just powers are from the consent of the governed. He used the word majesty because the people are, in reality, the kings in a republican form of government. Therefore, he calls it a treasonable usurpation.

James Madison, the father of the Constitution, said this. You want to know where we have fallen by the wayside? Listen to what he said: “Because it is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. We hold this prudent jealousy to be the first duty of citizens, and one of the noblest characteristics of the late revolution, that is, the American war for independence, the free men of America did not wait till usurped power had strengthened itself by exercise and entangled the question in precedents.”

“They saw all the consequences in principle and avoided the consequences by denying the principle.” Now listen to what Madison said. He said that what happened during the American Revolution was this: Our fathers did not wait until a usurped power had strengthened itself or had become entangled in legal precedents. No, they saw the consequences in the principle, and then they avoided the consequences by denying the principle.

What was he talking about? Do you remember how Parliament tried to tax the American colonists? There was the tea tax, the stamp tax, and all these taxes. Stop and think. The taxes were an extreme minimum—a half a cent, a cent. Who's willing to lose their life over a

penny or two pennies? It was not the tax or the amount of the tax. It was the principle. The colonies were never under Parliament. Parliament had no authority to tax the colonies.

Each colony had a charter, a constitution, a covenant, and an agreement with George III. George III was king of England, yes, but also king of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and all the colonies. Each colony had its own legislature. Thus, the colonies were never under Parliament. When Parliament began to pass laws saying they would pay this tea tax, stamp tax, or other tax, they said, “No, we won't,” because the principle was that Parliament had no authority over them.

How would you like it if Canada passed a law requiring us to pay them five cents on every American Federal Reserve note? What has Canada got to do with us in that sense of the word? What if China said we were going to pay them two cents on every Federal Reserve note? What has that got to do with us? They have never, and we have never, been under their authority, per se, as a government. It was the same situation in the American colonies. They said, “We are going to avoid the consequences by denying the principle. We don't owe Parliament a duly squat, and we're not going to pay them. We'll fight.” Read the Fairfax Resolves.

The problem today is that we've fallen asleep at the wheel. We've not been diligent in watching over our liberties, and hence they have been slowly and surely eroding away before our eyes. We've allowed usurpation to become strong, and there are so many legal precedents today that you go into the courtroom and are absolutely flabbergasted. I tell people I'm not a communist. I have no sympathy with communism whatsoever. But there was one communist whose statement I did agree with: Gus Hall. Gus Hall said the reason we refer to our courts as the halls of justice is because the only place you can get any justice is out in the halls.

Stop and think about that. That's the truth because there's none in the courtroom. We have fallen asleep at the wheel. Do you realize the Constitution of the United States limits the federal government? It does not limit it as closely as the Word of God, but it does limit it. While it makes 80 grants of power to the federal government, it limits or levies 115 prohibitions against it. And while it gives 20

grants of power to the federal legislation, then it also places 70 restraints upon it.

Limited government simply means that we the people are free to live our lives without governmental interference and without governmental permission. I'm not as old as some of you, but I'm older than a lot of you. I can remember when I was a boy, if I ever wanted to see a police officer, I had to go to town on Saturday and really look around, because we just didn't have them. We didn't need them. You can't drive five miles today without seeing 30 or 40 of them.

There's a reason for that. But the problem is this, folks: We've lost control of our government. Where government is limited, there is liberty and freedom. Where government is unlimited, there is tyranny, oppression, and enslavement. States' rights, when you understand them, is a means to secure the limitation of power.

Freedom from Tyranny and Despotism

States' rights include the biblical principle of freedom from tyranny and despotism. How free are we? How many freedoms have we lost in this country? I've heard people say, and I've seen people revel in this statement, “We are the freest country on the face of the earth.” Well, we may be the freest, but that does not mean that we are free. Can you have the flu just a little bit and not have the flu? No. If you got the flu, you got the flu.

If you are enslaved, you are enslaved. Stop and think how far we have progressed in this country that we now need governmental permission to do just about anything and everything. Let me use another word: we need a governmental license. Do you want to know what the word license means? Go to Black's Law Dictionary or Bouvier's Law Dictionary, and here is what you will find: permission from a competent authority to do that which otherwise would be unlawful to do.

Now you have to have a license to get married. Why is it unlawful to get married? You have to have a license to drive. Why is it unlawful to travel? You have to have a license to perform your occupation. Is it unlawful to work?

I could go on all night just on this. Do you realize that I was preaching in Fairfax County, Virginia, probably thirty to thirty-five years ago, and was absolutely horrified when the pastor told me that he had to get a license to cut down a tree in his yard? Fairfax County is right next to Washington. That same pastor's son, not too many years ago, was arrested for cutting down trees on his own property without a license.

Now ask yourself: How free are we? John Dickinson made this statement: "Another truth respecting the vigilance with which a free people should guard their liberty that deserves to be carefully observed is this. That a real tyranny may prevail in a state while the forms of a free constitution remain."

Folks, we have the form of a free constitution in this country. But let me ask you another question: How many of our politicians pay any attention to it? How many have ever read it, although all swear with an oath that they will uphold it and perform it and guard it?

Do you realize it is now possible to go through law school, graduate from law school, pass the bar exam, and never, ever have one course in constitutional law? And remember, most of our politicians are lawyers.

You can have tyranny while you have the form of a free Constitution. In my book, "The Christian Civil Government," I define the word tyrant. The root word from which tyrant comes literally means one who rules without God. So we are facing tyranny.

Look in Romans 13, verses 1 and 2: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God." Verse 2 says, "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive unto themselves damnation." It is true and exceedingly clear that God ordained civil government. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God."

I cannot read that passage without thinking of Lester Roloff. Many of you knew him. He had been dead a number of years when this was spoken; he was killed in a plane crash. The state of Texas attacked his church, the children's homes, and all the other homes

he had there. In a meeting with one of the welfare workers, he told her he was not going to take a license to exercise the ministry God had given him.

She said, "Now, Brother Roloff, don't you know the Bible says that every soul be subject to the higher powers?" He answered, "Yes, ma'am, and I don't have any problem with that issue. Lower powers has given me this." It is the lower powers; that's a fact. But when God said, "Let every soul be subject to the higher power," He meant that no matter how high you are in authority, there is always someone higher than you. I don't care if you are the president of the United States. I don't care who you are. God is supreme.

There is a billboard on I-75 heading north down in Florida. It says, "The real supreme court meets up here." Signed, God. That is true, because He is the final authority. He is the sovereign. Psalm 75, verses 6 and 7, says: "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is judge. He putteth down one and setteth up another."

God is sovereign. He is the one who puts up civil rulers, and He is the one who takes them down. Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Ashurbanipal, Jeroboam, and Ahab found that to be true. God put them up, and God could take them down. It is true that God ordained civil government. You cannot get around that; it is clear from Romans 13:1 and many other passages.

Although God ordained civil government, it is equally true that God has never ordained tyranny and despotism as a legitimate form of civil government. That does not mean God will never use them. Yes, He will. God is not the author, instigator, or infuser of evil, but He is its controller. God has used tyrants in times past to chastise His people. All you have to do is read Isaiah chapter 10: “O Assyrian, the rod of my power and the staff in their hand is my indignation.” It is true: God has used them.

But when you study the Bible, you find that tyranny and despotism have never been a legitimate form of government instituted and ordained by God. I will prove that from the Bible. When you think of tyranny and despotism, you must first think of the purpose of government. Do you realize that, first and foremost,

God has ordained civil government for our good? He did so by establishing it for our justice.

Look in verse 3: “For rulers are not a terror to the good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?” Then, “Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he,” the civil ruler, “is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid.” Why?

"For he beareth not the sword in vain." God says, I have given you civil government for your good. What this means is that the civil governor has the power of the sword and is to execute God's justice. If you do wickedly, be afraid; if you do not do wickedly, there is nothing to be afraid of at all. We must understand that whenever a government goes over and above and beyond its delegation of authority, it becomes corrupt, tyrannical, and wicked. Perverted, abused, misused, usurped, tyrannical, and oppressive governments are not an ordinance of God.

Why did God ordain government? He said it was to be a terror to the evil works and to protect the good works. When government is turned upside down and begins to terrorize the good works and protect the evil workers, that is not God's institution. Read Psalm 82. That is the psalm God gives against the judges and judicial rulers. It speaks of how they turn the world upside down by perverting justice. God has said, I have ordained civil government for your good; by your good I mean that it is to exercise justice, punish the wicked, and protect the righteous.

The problem is that fallen man likes to play God. Fallen man wants to pretend that there is no limitation upon his power, and therefore wants to throw off all restraints that God has placed upon him.

Consider Psalm 2, and then Hosea chapter 5. We could multiply verses, but Psalm 2 begins with this question: "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" What is the vain thing, and what is the raging? Look in verse 2.

"The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed saying, let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." In

other words, God in His sovereignty placed bands, restraints, and restrictions upon the civil rulers. He said, here is your delegation of power, just as God said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." That is exactly what He said to the civil rulers. But the civil rulers said, We do not like those restrictions. We are going to cast His bonds from us. We are going to throw off His cords. We are not going to have that. We will do what we want to do.

If you look at the next verse, verse 4, "He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." They are not going to get away with it, but that is how men want to do it. They want to break away from the restraints that God has placed upon them. Hosea 5:10 says, "The princes of Judah were like them that removed the bound"—or the boundaries. "Therefore, I'll pour out my wrath upon them like water."

The princes did not like the limitations that God placed upon them, so they moved the boundaries over a little bit. God says, "Therefore, I'll pour out my wrath upon you like water." You have to remember that water pours very easily, very freely, and very quickly. Any and all tyrannical, oppressive, and wicked governments that seek to enslave, bind, and destroy the people are in rebellion against God. They are also in rebellion against the very purpose for which God created them. He created government to be His minister of justice and to execute justice. He did not create the institution of government to enslave, oppress, and tyrannize.

Civil Government as God's Authority

Civil Rulers as God's Ministers

Secondly, God ordained civil government to be His minister and His instrument of justice. Since civil government was created by God, it is therefore accountable and responsible to God, and it has a mandate to represent Him.

Romans 13 shows us the titles God gives civil rulers. Verse 1 says, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power, but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God." Three times in that verse appears the word "powers." The word "powers" is the Greek word exousia, which simply means powers or authorities.

It literally says, There is no authority but that which is of God. No one can have any authority unless God gives it to him. With every grant of authority, God always places a limitation.

Verse 2 says, "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Here civil government is called the ordinance of God. Diatagē is the Greek word; it means that God instituted it and ordained it. Thus, in verse 1, civil government is referred to as a power or authority; in verse 2, it is the ordinance of God.

Now look at verse 3: "For rulers." The Greek word is archontes, which literally means chief ones, first ones, leaders, or rulers. If we stop right there, there is no one in this country who will disagree with us, because everybody will say that God instituted government. It has authority, power, and the ordinance of God.

This has to do with rulership and leadership. Then they say, “Obey your leaders.” But Romans 13 does not stop with verse 3. Look at verse 4: “For he”—who is the he? Go back to verse 3: “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?” Now the power and the rulers are connected.

That which God ordained to be a power, civil authority, His ordinance, and a ruler is referred to in verse 4 as “he”: “For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God.” Twice in verse 4, the civil ruler is called the minister of God.

Some of you have heard me say this before, but the Greek word is diakonos. It is where we get our English word what? Deacon. And what does the word deacon literally mean? Servant. Why did God ordain civil government? To be His deacon, to be His servant.

But that is not all. Verse 4 says, “For he is the minister of God to thee for good, but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is the deacon, or the servant of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” The word revenger is ekdikos in Greek. Ek is a preposition meaning out of or from, and dikos is from dikaios, which is righteousness. A revenger is someone who draws forth, draws out, or exacts righteousness.

Whose righteousness is the civil ruler to exact? It would have to be God's, for man does not have any righteousness. Civil rulers have no righteousness. God says, “I've ordained civil government,” not merely to be a power or an authority, an ordinance, or a means of dealing with leadership, but to be His deacon, His servant, His exactor, and the drawer forth of His righteousness.

It does not even stop with verse 4. Look in verse 6: “For this cause pay you tribute also. For they are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing.” Before explaining verse 6, turn to 2 Chronicles 19 and look at verse 6. There is a multitude of Scriptures, but this one deals with civil rulers exacting the righteousness of God: “And said to the judges, Take heed what you do, for you judge not for man, but for the Lord who is with you in the judgment.”

Who are judges to judge for? The Lord. They are to exact His righteousness. Period. Civil rulers, then, are to be God's exactors of righteousness.

When you go back to Romans 13:6, you see once again that they are called God's ministers. However, the word ministers in verse 6 is different from the word ministers in verse 4. In verse 4, it is diakonos, from which we get our word deacon. In verse 6, it is leitourgos, the plural leitourgoi, from which we get our English word liturgy. They are God's liturgy. A liturgy is a public form of worship. There is high liturgy and low liturgy, but there is liturgy. When you think of liturgy, you may think of the Roman Catholic Church, where people dip their fingers in what they call holy water, kneel, and cross themselves, or of the Episcopal Church.

Many Baptists say, “We will never have any of that stuff.” Every church has a liturgy. We had one tonight: somebody prayed before I preached, we sang songs before I preached, and we took an offering. That is a Baptist thing, but it is a liturgy. Whatever you do—if you pray or sing—that is a liturgy. It is a public form of worship.

How many are willing to go as far as God does when it comes to civil government? What does God say in Romans chapter 13? Yes, God ordained civil government, but He ordained civil government not just to be raw power, not just to have tyrannical authority, not

just to be an ordinance, and not just to have leadership. Yes, He gave them power and authority. It is His ordinance.

And He made them rulers that they might be His deacons, His exactors of righteousness and His public worship. Whenever any form of civil government ceases to function in the way that God ordained it, it ceases to exist for the purpose for which God created it. It actually becomes autonomous and idolatrous. God only created three institutions: the family, the church, and civil government.

We can see this very clearly in the first two. I do not know why we are so blind when it comes to the third one. I do not think I am going to be foolish enough to ask this question again, because I asked this question Sunday to our people. I said, "Why did God give thee a wife?" One of my men said, "Because God wanted to chastise her." Of course, he got a good laugh. I said, "All right, well, let me ask you this: Then why did God give you a wife?" I could ask this another way: Women, why did God give you a husband?

Now, listen to me. If I were to ask you, "Why did God give me my wife?" did God give me my wife so I could be a tyrant, slap her around, and demand that she jump every time I speak? If she did not do that, would I kick her, abuse her, and hurt her? Did God give me a wife for that reason? Do I have any authority to look at my wife and say, "Now, sugar, I can tell you the Scripture says, 'Wives, obey your husbands in everything'"?

Suppose I do not have enough money to pay my bills this month, so I ask my wife to take this pistol, go down, and rob the bank so I will have enough money to pay my bill. Do I have any authority to ask her to rob the bank? No. God has never given me any authority to violate His law or His word.

God gave me my wife, according to Ephesians chapter 5, so I could be a type of Christ to her and love her the way Christ loved the church. I could love her exclusively and sacrificially. God gave her to me so that she could be a type of the church and submit lovingly to me, representing the church's position to Christ.

God never gave me a wife so that I could be a tyrant, be oppressive, abuse and misuse her, or harm and hurt her. Why did God make me the pastor of a church? Why did God make Brother

Romo or Brother Patrick a pastor? Did God make us pastors so that we could destroy people, hurt people, and preach lies and fables? Did God make me a pastor so that I could tell everybody, "You will wear red every time you come to this church, or I will run you off"? I have no authority to tell you what color of clothes to wear.

If I demanded that my wife do things that were wicked, wrong, and ungodly, and I abused her, you would say, "You have left your sphere of authority." God never gave me the right, power, or authority to misuse and abuse my wife. If I tried to destroy the church and preach lies, error, and heresy, you would say that God never gave me the authority to do that. I had gone above and beyond and had lost and left my sphere of authority. We can see that in the family and in the church. Why can't we see it when it comes to civil government? God ordained civil government for the simple purpose of justice: punishing the wicked and protecting the righteous.

Yet so many people have misconstrued, misinterpreted, and misunderstood Romans 13, trying to make it teach unlimited submission to civil rulers—the divine right of kings. "Doesn't the Bible say, 'Let every soul be subject to higher powers'?" Yes, it does. But those higher powers are themselves to be subject; and if they are subject, they will not ask me to do that which is wicked, wrong, unbiblical, and ungodly.

Misinterpretation of Submission Passages

I want you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter, chapter 2, because I want to show you a passage that has been greatly perverted. I have had this verse thrown at me so many times; it is unbelievable. Look in 1 Peter 2, verse 13. The Bible says, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." People stop right there and then interpret the word ordinance to mean ordinance, law, regulation, or statute. Well, the Bible says we have to obey any and every regulation that they give us. But what if our country passed a law like China?

Suppose the government said that women could have only one child, and if they had more than one, they had to "kill all over one that you had." Would you obey that law? Why? The Bible says, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."

But the word ordinance in verse 13 has nothing to do with law, statute, regulation, or ordinance as we think of it. It does not even have to do with law as such. The Greek word for ordinance is ktisis, K-T-I-S-I-S.

It literally means that which is established, or the act of establishing or founding. Does God demand a certain form of government? No. I believe the principles in the Bible lead to a republican form of government, but does God demand that we have a monarchy? No. A constitutional monarchy? No. Does God demand that we have an oligarchy or an aristocracy? No.

Could God ever use a monarchy? Yes, He did. Could He ever use a constitutional monarchy? Yes, He has—England. Could God use a republican form of government, like in our country? Yes, He could. The point is this: If you look at verse 13, it says, “Submit yourself to every ordinance of man.” Read it this way: submit yourselves to every kind or every form of government of man for the Lord's sake. Then it is clarified: “whether it be to the King as supreme,” whether it is a monarchy, “or unto governors,” some type of representative government, “or to governors as of them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well.”

God is saying that, in one sense, it does not matter what kind of government is established—whether a monarchy, a constitutional monarchy, or a republic—as long as it is established to execute the ministry God gave it, and that ministry is justice. The punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do well is exactly what Romans 13:3–4 says. Why did God ordain government? That it might be a ministry of justice, execute the wicked, and protect the righteous. Thus, whether we have a constitutional monarchy or our republic, as long as it functions as God ordained, it is still a biblical government.

I believe the principles in the Bible lead to a republican form of government, but David was king, and he was a man after God's own heart. I am simply pointing out that the Bible does not demand unlimited submission to government. If I had time, I could give you illustration after illustration. I could even show you in the Bible where God Himself acted to overthrow civil rulers, and He did so.

States' Rights Encompass All God-Given Rights

States' rights would include any and every right that a free people have been given by God. They include the right of self-defense, the right of nullification, the right of secession, the right to worship unhindered, the right to be unlicensed by government, the right to freely assemble, the right of redress of grievances, and the right of freedom of speech. I could go on and on, but all I am trying to show you is this: states' rights, when viewed from a biblical perspective, translate into individual rights. Therefore, they would cover every right that has been given to us by our Heavenly Father.

Faith, Virtue, and Freedom

We cannot be free, nor can we maintain our freedom, apart from obedience to and the blessings of our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. Do you realize what the first freedom should be that we desire? It is freedom from our sins through the atonement of Jesus Christ. The second freedom we should desire is freedom from our lusts, or freedom from our wrong thinking, so that we might bring our lives under self-control and discipline and bring them into conformity with the Word of God.

These are the two basic freedoms. The problem in this country is that many people wish to be free only so that they might be anarchists and rebels. May I point out that freedom is from sin; it is not freedom to sin. Real freedom is the ability and liberty to do that which we have been commanded by God. Real liberty and freedom are the ability to assume responsibility for our lives and actions under God, in the way God has commanded us.

We cannot escape the concept of government. Lay this truth down deeply in your heart: there is no individual, family, church, state, or nation that can exist without government. We have to have government. It is not a question of whether we will have government, but what kind of government we will have.

I have had people tell me, “Brother Weaver, you just want to overthrow the government.” No, I do not. You cannot live without government. I do not want to overthrow the government; I want to throw wickedness out of the government and have a government the

way God ordained it. That is all I want. We are going to be governed. We will either be governed biblically, or we will be governed by someone who will use force. We will either have a godly government and be free, or we will have an autonomous, idolatrous government and be enslaved.

Robert Winthrop said this years ago. In fact, the source I got it from is a book printed in 1852. Listen carefully: “Men, in a word, must necessarily be controlled either by a power within them or by a power without them, either by the Word of God or by the strong arm of man, either by the Bible or by the bayonet.” When we refuse the Word of God, we condemn ourselves to be governed by the bayonet.

Have you ever wondered why our freedoms are disappearing so quickly in this country, or why you cannot awaken people? Our brother knocked on about 9,000 doors, and most people probably stood there with a blank expression on their face; they had no idea what he was talking about. Let me explain: a slave is a slave is a slave.

You say, that is no explanation. Oh, yes, it is. The Bible teaches that man by nature—that is, without the regenerating grace of God—is a slave to his sins. Jesus Christ said, “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant,” or the slave, “of sin.” When men are enslaved personally, and their lusts have control over them, reign over them, and rule over them, the man under personal bondage has no concept of national liberty and freedom. He cannot even think in terms of freedom because he is still a slave. Why in the world should a slave be concerned about national or state liberty and freedom?

What has happened in this country is this: when our country was first founded, it was based upon the word of God. We had one culture, one Bible, and one faith. Everybody agreed, basically, that the Bible was the word of God, that Jesus Christ was Lord and Savior, and that we were to be a Christian people.

But over the years, we have lost our faith. As a nation, we have deviated from the word of God. We despised the word of God, denied the word of God, and denigrated the word of God. When we lost our faith, we lost our virtue. That is why you have a sexual revolution

and every other revolution. When you lose your virtue, you lose your freedom.

Many of you have read George Washington's farewell address. Here is a sentence from that address: "The federal government can never be in danger of degenerating into a monarchy, an oligarchy, an aristocracy, or any other despotic or oppressive form of government, so long as there shall remain any virtue in the body of the people." Where there is no virtue, there is no liberty and no freedom. Where there is no virtue, you are going to have slavery and bondage.

Peter admonished us in 2 Peter, chapter 1, verse 5: "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue." I said earlier that when we lose our faith, we lose our virtue; when we lose our virtue, we lose our freedom. You must have faith before you can ever have virtue.

When we think of national liberty and national freedom, think of all the people in all the nations that God either sent into captivity or destroyed because they refused to worship Him. No faith, no virtue, no freedom. National freedom and state freedom are possible only by having personal freedom. No man, family, state, or nation can be free apart from Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is the source of our rights and our freedom. Benjamin Rush.

One of the signers of the Declaration of Independence said, “The only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in religion,” or Christianity. “Without this, there could be no virtue. And without virtue, there can be no liberty. And liberty is the object and life of all republican governments. Without religion,” that is, without Christianity, “I believe that learning does real mischief to the morals and principles of mankind.” Education divorced from Christianity produces only educated fools and crooks.

As old Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., used to say, you have got to be educated where you can forge a check. If you have no morality, integrity, or Christianity, all you will be is an educated fool. “The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.” States’ rights translate into individual rights, family rights, and church rights. When states’ rights are denied, inevitably our churches will not be free, our families will not be free, and we will not be free. Read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy

28, and you will find that God promises blessings in obedience and curses in disobedience.

If we want liberty and freedom individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally, we must come back to the Word of God, submit to it, and make it our standard of daily living in every area of life.

Father, we ask that You would indeed teach us and help us to see the vital importance of faith and virtue, and their connection with liberty and freedom. Give us, Lord, hearts that will be obedient. Direct our paths, that our lives may be brought into conformity to Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

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