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that believers *"may be one in Us"* (John 17:20-23). It is *"the unity of the Spirit"* that establishes oneness in hope, in our calling, in the Lord, in faith, in baptism, and in God (Ephesians 4:1-6). The Lord's church exists to bring us to *"the unity of the faith"* (Ephesians 4:11-16). As we *"speak the same thing"*, it should not be because our language is the same, but because we are *"perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:10).

May none of the foregoing be construed to imply any measure of approval for civil disobedience. When the world was under the dominion of the Roman Empire, Paul taught, *"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves"* (Romans 13:1-2). Nevertheless, it is simply inconsistent with the wisdom set forth in scripture for those who influence policy to set a course toward an increase in government control.

## *"The Assembling Of Ourselves Together"*

*Hebrews 10:24-25*

### **Sunday**

10:15 am.....Worship  
Las Vegas Library  
833 Las Vegas Boulevard North

### **Tuesday**

7:00 pm.....Ladies' Study  
Winstead residence

### **Wednesday**

7:00 pm.....Study & Worship  
Jerry & Beverly Dockens residence

**Visitors Welcome.  
Members Expected.**

## *"Give Attention To Reading"*

*1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:13*

**Sunday**...Proverbs 13; Judges 1:1-2:10; Luke 9:7-27

**Monday**...Psalm 68:1-10; Judges 2:11-4:10; Luke 9:28-48

**Tuesday**...Psalm 68:11-23; Judges 4:11-6:10; Luke 9:49-10:16

**Wednesday**...Psalm 68:24-35; Judges 6:11-7:14; Luke 10:17-37

**Thursday**...Proverbs 14; Judges 7:15-8:35; Luke 10:38-11:13

**Friday**...Psalm 69:1-12; Judges 9:1-49; Luke 11:14-32

**Saturday**...Psalm 69:13-21; Judges 9:50-11:28; Luke 11:33-52

# *"Sound Doctrine"*

*Titus 2:1*

## **THE LEGITIMATE MAGNITUDE OF GOVERNMENT**

Bryan Matthew Dockens

The ideology of some, as clearly reflected in current events, favors government that is practically unlimited in its size and scope. Such political philosophy, however, does not reflect the wisdom provided in the scriptures.

The legitimate function of government, as prescribed in God's word, is limited to *"the punishment of evildoers and... the praise of those who do good"* (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:14). It is simply beyond the purpose set forth by the Lord for government to intrude into the micromanagement of commerce, education, the arts, health care, housing, and transportation.

Government, in fact, is quite ineffective at such things. So said Solomon, *"If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, do not marvel at the matter; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them"* (Ecclesiastes 5:8). Bureaucracy most often serves to hinder, rather than promote, the accomplishment of worthwhile goals.

Truly, oppression and expansive government are inseparable. When the nation of Israel rejected God's way by demanding a king to rule over them (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 8:1-8), the Almighty instructed Samuel to *"solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them"* (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 8:9), which thing He did, saying, *"This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take*

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*your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day"* (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 8:11-18). As the saying goes, "A government big enough to give you everything you want is a government big enough to take everything you have".

Modern efforts toward the consolidation of international rule in a centralized authority merely follow a disturbing precedent met with divine disapproval early in human history. The Lord had repeatedly ordered man to "fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28; 9:1), yet the occupants of Babel defied Him, saying, "let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4). The earth's entire human population, united by a single language, settled on a plain in the land of Shinar, where they intended to build a city (Genesis 11:1-4). Upon inspection of their activities (Genesis 11:5), God observed, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them" (Genesis 11:6). Therefore, God determined to "confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (Genesis 11:7). The outcome was that "the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city" (Genesis 11:8).

It is manifestly not the will of God that humanity be united by language; neither is it His will that mankind be united by location; nor is it His intention that all men be united as citizens of the same government. The Almighty has an altogether different plan for the unity of His creation, namely the gospel. Jesus prayed to the Father

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## "THE FIRST ONE TO PLEAD HIS CAUSE SEEMS RIGHT"

Bryan Matthew Dockens

*"The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him"* (Proverbs 18:17). Wise Solomon observed the reflexive tendency on the part of man to accept as truth the first version of events presented in a potential controversy.

When gossip circulates through the workplace, the neighborhood, or even the church, the first version of events is usually presumed to be true. This is so because *"The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body"* (Proverbs 18:8). Just as a well prepared meal will go untouched by a child who has spoiled his dinner with a bag of candy, similarly the truth holds no interest for those willing to accept rumors. The "other side of the story" may never be heard, and even when it is, it is often disregarded as a weak defense against the supposed facts already established in everyone's minds.

For this reason, it is imperative to refrain from spreading rumors in the first place. *"Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases"* (Proverbs 26:20).

God commanded, *"You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people"* (Leviticus 19:16). The behavior of a "busybody" is described as "disorderly" (2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3:11) because "gossips and busybodies" are those who say "things which they ought not" (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:13). And, Paul exposed the wickedness of "whisperings" (Romans 1:29; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:20) insomuch as gossip thrives on whispers while the truth demands an open hearing.

When a dispute must be resolved, both accounts deserve fair consideration. The Pharisees opposed Jesus, but Nicodemus correctly asked, *"Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?"* (John 7:51). The will of God in such cases is plain: *"Test all things; hold fast what is good"* (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:21), for *"He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him"* (Proverbs 18:13).