

Resolution on the Moral Character Necessary for Civil Authority

Civil authorities are servants of God whom He has ordained and ordered to be a terror, not to good works, but to evil (Rom. 13:3-4).

The pages of Scripture record instructive examples of political leaders who failed in this regard. Pharaoh's heart was hardened against the God of his Israelite slaves and their leader Moses, withdrawing his permission to allow them some freedom and then losing his army to the Red Sea, and so he failed in this regard. Rehoboam heeded the counsel of his younger advisors and rejected the counsel of his elders, swearing to increase unjust burdens on the people he ruled only to watch ten of his twelve tribes stage a revolution, and so he failed in this regard. Wicked Haman plotted against the one man who refused to bow and tremble in his presence, finding the gallows he had built for that man a good fit for himself, and so he too failed in this regard.

The psalmist is clear that every civil authority who sets himself against the King of kings and Lord of lords shall incur His just judgment. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? 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.' He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure" (Ps. 2:1-5).

Conversely, the Bible also records the accomplishments of political leaders who possessed the moral character necessary for civil authority. Nebuchadnezzar, having been subdued under the mighty hand of God, came to demonstrate the humility necessary to lead a nation according to the will of the Lord (Dan. 4:33-35). David, when confronted for his sins that threatened his kingdom and gave occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme, came to demonstrate the contrition necessary to lead a nation according to the will of the Lord (Psalm 51). Moses, although inarticulate and fearful, came to demonstrate the courageous strength necessary to lead a nation according to the will of the Lord (Exodus 3).

Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, understood the moral character necessary for civil authority. Counselling his son-in-law about his need for help with the burden of civil service, Jethro enumerated the qualities for which Moses needed to look in securing that help. They were to be "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness" (Exod. 18:21). Such men and women are a rare find in today's tumult of American politics. Where ability is needed, incompetence is often found. Where the fear of God is necessary, leaders shake their fists defiantly in His face. Where truth must be told, lies and betrayal are the norm. Where there should be a hatred for covetousness, there is instead the Washington cartel of too many politicians bankrolled by special interests.

Therefore, the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America, meeting at its annual conference at Hope Baptist Church in Hanover, PA, June 21-23, 2016, resolves that we shall not surrender these biblical principles regarding the moral character necessary for civil authority. We call on civil servants and candidates for public office to repent of their sins and to cling in saving faith to Jesus Christ who died for the sinner on Calvary and who rose again from the dead. We determine to faithfully follow the exhortation of the apostle Paul to us, "that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4).