

Are All Rulers Chosen by God?

From: In Defense of My Father:
Toward a Better Understanding of the Sovereignty of God
Chapter 7: Addressing Misconceptions
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Misconception: God sets all rulers in place.

This statement is not completely true. After having taught the Romans that they were not under law but under grace, Paul wrote:

Romans 13:1-4

*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.** ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to **good works**, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is **good**, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is God's minister to you for **good**. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.*

We often hear people say after an election in the United States of America that whoever wins was chosen by God. Let us examine that thinking. In many countries, as is true in the USA, the leaders are chosen by the people. As long as the elections were executed without corruption, those the people selected become the leaders. What can happen in these types of countries is that the people themselves tend toward evil and select an evil person to rule. God does not set evil rulers in place. We know this because of verses three and four above. Rulers are not a terror to good works but to evil works. If a leader becomes a terror to good works and allows evil, we can confidently say that ruler was not appointed by God. Good rulers will not interfere with the preaching of the gospel. This is why we are instructed to pray for our leaders.

1 Timothy 2:1-4:

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,

² *for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.*

³ *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our*

Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

In any form of government that believers find themselves, however, believers should seek to cooperate with the government. There are four exceptions to this.

First of all, if any government demands that Christians worship a god other than the one true God, we are to disobey. The perfect example is that of the three Hebrew men who refused to worship the image the king commanded them to worship (Dan. 3). Their refusal to obey and God's deliverance of them from the king's wrath caused the king to glorify God.

The next instance in which we must disobey is if the governing authorities mandate that we promote, agree with, or commit evil. We see this during the time Moses was born. The Egyptian midwives were told to let the male Hebrew babies die, but they refused to obey. God rewarded them for this (Ex. 1:21).

A third example in which it is appropriate to disobey is if the leader forbids us to teach in the name of Jesus. In the book of Acts, the believers refused to obey this command, saying, "We ought to obey God rather than man."

Finally, we see that Paul knew his rights as a Roman citizen, and he stood up for these rights when he was being unjustly beaten and imprisoned. In many countries, citizens have rights, and it is appropriate for us to stand up for ourselves when our rights are violated.

There are evil rulers in the world because this world is evil. God does not set them in power. They become powerful through evil and corrupt means. God loves them and sent His Son to die for them, and He will exert His grace upon them to come to know Him and believe, but what they do for evil is not from God. Good rulers, like good shepherds, take care of their citizens no matter what form of government exists. Good leaders are opposed to evil.

What about this verse?

Proverbs 21:1

*The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord,
Like the rivers of water;
He turns it wherever He wishes.*

God does exert His influence over rulers for the benefit of His children. We can see examples of this throughout the Bible. One very amazing example is that of Nebuchadnezzar. He was exceedingly impressed with himself and his rule and did not give glory to God for what he accomplished. So God taught him, "that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He chooses" (Dan. 4:32). Nebuchadnezzar abused His power against God's people. God intervened. After being made into an animal-like creature for a season, God restored

him, and Nebuchadnezzar “blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever.”

God does not put rulers in place to do evil, but to do good (Rom. 14:1-4). When rulers are evil, God can take hold of that ruler’s heart and guide it toward righteousness, especially when we pray, but ultimately, rulers still have free will, and God is not to blame for their actions. When we see oppression on earth, we pray that God will work in the heart of that evil ruler. Remember that no matter how evil a leader might be, Jesus died for him or her, actually loves them, and desires that they might know Him, the one true God. It is inappropriate for us to pray that anyone for whom Jesus died to be “taken out.” This will often happen during times of war, but as believers, let us pray that God will intervene by revealing Himself to them.