



SEVEN PHASES
OF
GOVERNMENT:

A DIALOGUE.

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Dialogue on Government.

A. I am glad you have called as I want to talk with you upon some subjects which have been difficulties with us of late, and which have greatly exercised my mind, *i. e.* the *proper order* among the Lord's people.

B. It will be a pleasure to open the Word and learn what God has to say. Many are exercised about this question at present, and truly various are the ideas some have formed. But let us be on the safe and only right side, by turning "to God, and to the Word of His grace," for as Elihu asked, "Who teacheth like Him?" (Job. xxxvi, 22.)

A. I see two extremes among Christians. With some there is too much looseness, while with others, it is rather law or legality. So I find a great difficulty as to what course to pursue.

B. I see your difficulty. You see grace working in the Gospel, and souls are saved and made happy, for which all can surely praise God; but after such are gathered into a Christian assembly, one class goes on without care as to its spiritual condition. People may come in and go out, as they please. The other class, who are less active in the Gospel desire to have order, and to you, this seems to be partially law.

A. Well, it seems pretty much in this way, but I plainly see there ought to be exercise and due care with regard to an assembly.

B. I think the question will soon become clear if you can see the difference between *grace*, *law*, and *government*. When it is a question of salvation, nothing but grace—free grace—can procure it for the sinner. If it is a question of our walk as believers, Rom. vi clearly teaches that “We are not under law, but under grace.” The epistles to the Gal. and Heb. are also very clear as to this. Yet while all this is true, grace never overthrows government. Many, I am sure, never get clear as to the difference between law and government. When I say *law*, I mean, of course, the moral law—the ten commandments. Let us look at this for a moment. Gal. iii. teaches that the law commenced with Moses at Mount Sinai, and the Jewish nation were under it until the seed (Christ) came. Now it has done its work, and we are in another dispensation altogether, one of free grace. But in Gen. ix, 1-7 we see that the principles of government were given to Noah after the flood. In the age before the flood, man was left to himself and his conscience, and how did he conduct himself? “Corruption and violence filled the earth.” Now, through Noah, God introduces something new—*government*, and Rom. xiii, 1-6 is a further explanation of Gen. ix. Now, as we pass on through the Word, the truth concerning “government” in its different phases, becomes clearer; and although we are now in this favored dispensation of free grace, yet we need to remember that we are not to ignore *government*. Government abides, and will abide to the end of the chapter. 2 Peter ii, 10, and Jude 8 are a solemn word as to this, telling us that one of the marks of the last days is that men “despise government.” And is it not especially

the apostacy of the professing church that is treated of in these epistles? And hence men "despise government" in the Church, as well as in the world. Let us glean what we can from the Word about it.

A. This is what we need, and now I see there is a train of thought we have not yet followed out.

B. I believe we might follow it out in seven different stages or spheres, and look at each one separately until we get to the end. As I go along, be free to ask all the questions you desire; and when I use the word rule, or government, of course the meaning is the same, for to rule and to govern are the same thought.

I.—SELF-GOVERNMENT.

Turn first to Prov. xvi, 32, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that *ruleth* his spirit than he that taketh a city." This we will term, to commence with, self-government. And how very practical, to commence with ourselves, as individuals. If this was more before us, how much after-trouble and sorrow might be avoided. Self-government is self-control; and if differences arise among us as Christians, and we are living consciously in God's presence, and desiring only His glory, we will be able to talk them over and test them by the Word, without losing our heads, and getting angry, and saying things to wound each other. We will be able to *rule our spirit*, our *tongues*, etc. Here is where so many of us fail. We let little things go unnoticed, forgetting that it is "the little foxes" which destroy the vines. Prov. xxv, 28 gives a sorrowful description of a man who does not exercise self-government, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, and without

walls," plainly teaching us what the enemy has done, and how the heart is open to the attack of every foe. Very many who, perhaps, are true children of God, are just like this; and the more one thinks of it, the graver sin it appears. Self-government gives us control over the tongue, that unruly member. A perfect man, James tells us, is one who can control his tongue.

A. Does ruling the spirit mean the same as the Apostle keeping his body under?

B. In principle it is, but may go a step further, for there are the two parts of a man to be guarded. See Eph. ii, 3, "Fulfilling the desires of the *flesh* and of the *mind*." This is what characterized them before their conversion. The mind refers more to the higher part of man, and the flesh to the lower part. In Col. iii, 5, we are to mortify our members, *i. e.* the lusts of the flesh; and in verses 8, 9, we are to put off "anger, wrath, malice," etc. This is more connected with the mind, the will, the results of an unbroken will. Many who would shun the former, may indulge the latter. In 2 Cor. vii. we are exhorted to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. To indulge either, dishonors the Lord, and defiles us. Prov. xvi. refers to the spirit, and 1 Cor. ix, keeping the body under, refers to the flesh. Yet, in the latter, the Apostle may have had in mind the whole man, spirit and flesh.

A. I am very thankful to see this difference between the flesh and spirit, for I never before could see why we are told in Col. iii. to mortify *five* things, and in verses 8 and 9, to put off *six* things; but now it is clear that the mortifying refers to the *flesh*, and the putting off to the *spirit*. I see that the indulg-

ing in either only reveals where we are—away from the Lord; and until there is self-judgment, we are robbed of the joy of communion.

B. Yes, truly, we are dwelling now upon the practical side of Christian life, which we have largely left out of our teaching in the past. The Holy Spirit leaves no margin for indulgence in these things. It is quite true that “if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father.” This is God’s gracious provision. But how needed also is this word, “My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not.” The Lord Himself says, “Go, and sin no more.” Would that we thought far more of God’s perfect standard of holiness, so as to see the necessity of exercising government, keeping the body under, and ruling the spirit. This would be a decided check to all such things as *envy, strife* and *division*, and free the lives and assemblies of God’s people from whisperings, jealousies, backbitings, etc. These things which are so often overlooked, would all be judged as evil, and put away from us; and good government being exercised, the Holy Spirit would develope in us His graces, and we would be more true and decided witnesses for our ever blessed Lord, who alone is worthy of our lives, our service, and our all.

Mrs. A. I am truly thankful for this line of teaching. God’s standard of holiness seems clear, and sin appears more sinful, and especially these envies and backbitings, which we plainly know do sap our spiritual lives when we indulge in them. May we all awake to see the importance of practical godliness in our daily lives, and the governing of that unruly member, “the tongue,” spoken of in James iii.

B. It is important to notice the two examples given in James, first the "horses," and then the "ships." "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which, though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whither-soever the governor listeth." Thus the bit and bridle on the horse causes him to obey and submit, and the governor, with the small helm, controls the ship, which otherwise would be a prey to every fierce wind. And does not this furnish us with instruction as to how the tongue, yea and our spirits, need to be ruled and governed, and our bodies kept under—our tastes, our appetites, our spirits controlled. The power is with us, if we will but use it." (2 Pet. i, 3.) We possess *eternal life*, are truly children of God, and have the holy Spirit, and when walking in communion with the Lord we are using the power, we are watchful and careful to exercise self-judgment.

A. One great trouble we have had has been these envies and jealousies, and this by the most active ones among us, sometimes.

B. Yes, it might be said in some places, it is a chronic disease, eating and sapping the whole spiritual life from those who indulge in such things. And it also distresses whole gatherings, and no wonder if there is no gospel energy, and no conversions. How could the Lord give permanent blessing when such things are allowed? These are part of the seven things that God hates. Prov. vi, 16-19, "A proud look, a lying tongue, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, he that soweth *discord* among

brethren." There are truly an abomination unto the Lord, and to Christians who indulge in them we may well apply Prov. xxii, 10, and xxv, 23. To form an idea of how the Lord hates these things, let us look at several passages. Prov. xiii, 10; xiv, 30; xv. 18; xvi, 28; xvii, 1, 14, 19; xviii, 6, 19; xx, 3; xxii, 10; xxvi, 17-21; xxvii, 4; xxviii, 25; xxix, 22; xxx, 33; 1 Cor. iii, 1-3; 2 Cor. xii, 20; 1 Tim. vi, 4, 5; 2 Tim. ii, 24; Titus iii, 9; James iii, 13-18.

Mrs. A. Well this is truly wonderful, and yet it should not be, for if we understand how great God's holiness is, and what His standard is for us, we must expect that He will rebuke all that robs Him of His glory among His people. But I never knew before how many Scriptures there were touching this one particular sin.

A. It would be very profitable for every one of us to group such passages together, and read them more frequently.

B. Now good self-government means that we control ourselves in all these things, not letting any of them control us. And by so doing, we are able to rule our spirits, and keep our bodies under. May the Lord, in His infinite mercy, give us to be more with Himself, and then we shall have power for true self-government.

Perhaps now, we may pass on. When once we get the thought of government clearly in our minds, and where it commences, it widens out further and further until it covers the whole earth, as when one drops a pebble into a pond the circles enlarge until they reach the shore.

Now we will see what the Holy Spirit gives us regarding

2.—HOME GOVERNMENT.

We find instructions given for the husband, wife, children, parents and even servants. Gen. iii, 16, (last clause) and 1 Cor. xi, 3 shew who the Lord has chosen to be the *head* of the house—the man. Hence responsibility here commences with the husband or father. Gen. ii shews God's thoughts concerning the wife—taken out of man's side to walk with him, to be a suitable companion, to assist him in fulfilling his responsibilities in the home circle. 1 Pet. iii, 1-7, gives a suited word for all wives; their manner of life, even their dress, and the place of *honour* in which they should hold their husbands. Sarah (a princess) is cited as an example. "She *obeyed* Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well." Verse 7 shews the husband's consideration for his wife as the weaker vessel, that their "prayers be not hindered."

A. Would prayer here suggest family worship?

B. No doubt it would, and it is important for parents to see this. When needs and difficulties present themselves to those walking together according to God's order, faith knows that God is sufficient, and hence His face is sought in earnest prayer by both husband and wife. And if the order and government of a Christian's home are to be maintained, how necessary is prayer! And wherever you see its absence in Christian families, there will be confusion and an un-Christ-like atmosphere. When needs arise, the parents should, alone with God, present them before the throne of grace. Yet, where there are servants and children, how suited and spiritual that the *head* should summon all the

household daily, to hear the word of God and to bow in prayer. When this is carried out we believe the foundation for good *government* is laid. (See Deut. iv, 10 ; xxxi, 12.)

Now in Eph. v, 22-vi, 9 ; Col. ii, 18-iv, 1, we get first the wife's place again. She is to own the *headship* of her husband. "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands," next "Children obey your parents." How sorrowful to those who understand something of the importance of home government, to see how frequently the order is reversed. Parents have to obey their children and allow them to rule ; and all under the plea of grace. Surely this is not following the example of "faithful Abraham," of whom it was said, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." (Gen. xviii, 19.) Here is a man of faith (long before the law was given), maintaining good government in his home, and God commended him for it. "Them that honor Me, I will honor," surely applies here, while of Eli God said, "They that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. (1 Sam. ii, 30.) And wherefore? "His sons made themselves vile, and *he restrained them not.* (1 Sam. iii, 13. What a contrast!

Mrs. A. I see now where we have failed in our home through not understanding God's principles of government, and why the eldest of our family are beyond our control. We never, in grace and love, maintained good government while they were young. We thought it would be *law* to demand submission. But I see now the difference between *law* and *government*. The Lord give us grace and wisdom for the future.

A. Yes, we have failed, and I am much to blame in not having taken my proper place in our home; and in leaving these things mostly to my wife, who has acted in grace, while government has been neglected. I see now where one's responsibility as a father comes in. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture (discipline) and admonition of the Lord. (Eph. vi, 4.)

B. Yes, surely. He should maintain his position as *head* of the house to the glory of God, and in this the wife would naturally turn to him for wise government, and seek to assist him in guiding the house and training the children. (Prov. xiii, 24; xix, 18; xxii, 15; xxiii, 15; xxix, 15-17.) There is no need to rule as *tyrants*, but as *parents*, seeking to follow the example of our Heavenly Father, who exercises a wise and holy government in his family. He loves each child of His with a true and perfect love, but "whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth," (Heb. xii, 5.), thus seeking their welfare and blessing.

Mrs. A. I believe in the end, children will love and respect their parents all the more for having maintained good government.

B. Surely; for the Lord has said "Them that honor Me, I will honor." But wisdom and grace to govern rightly, according to God's mind, must come from the Lord Himself. Therefore how necessary that the husband and wife should be united in their prayers, and in their aim, if they would have the Lord's help and blessing.

A. Do you think the injunction to servants in Eph. and Col. comes under this head?

B. Surely it does. It was said of Abraham, "He will command his children and his household,"

which must include the servants. Every servant ought to be subject to the government of the house where they are. And Christian masters ought to have government among their servants while they are warned against extremes. How blessed it would be if the Divine pattern were followed. Our Lord became a *servant* though He was *Master* also. And what a Lord and Master He is! He is also Head of the Church, as the husband is the head of the wife. Hence, husbands, masters and servants can all learn from Him.

We will look now at the third sphere of government.

3.—CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

Here we are reminded of Paul's words to Timothy, "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Here, we are looked at as being in the house of God; and every rightly gathered company of the Lord's people represents God's dwelling place upon the earth. He "dwelleth not in temples made with hands." (Acts vii, 48; xvii, 24.) He dwells now among His people, and if He insists upon proper order and government in our homes, how much more important that it should be carried out in His own house, "the house of God."

A. Would Ps. lxxxix, 7 apply here?

B. In principle it would, and so also Ps. xciii, 5. These are solemn and pointed passages, and ought to be more carefully read and meditated upon. We ought always to remember on entering an assembly of Christians, that *God is there*, and therefore holiness characterizes such a place, and so reverence ought to characterize us.

A. Some call this popery.

B. Yes, some who have never learned the true character of an assembly, and what true government is, (or if they have known it, have sadly given it up in practice). Heb. xiii, 17 gives us the principle we are presenting. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." And as to those who had "gone before" we read, 7th verse, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God; whose faith follow." Surely this cannot be called popery, but simply submission to God, and to His Word, and to the wise and holy government of His house. (See Eph. v, 21; 1 Pet. v, 5. R.V.) "They watch for your souls as they that must give account." God be praised for such men and give them wisdom, grace, love and patience to care for the honour of Christ among His beloved people.

Now we will look at some of the ways in which this care should be exercised. In the reception of believers it is specially needed, for carelessness and lack of order here, often leads to endless trouble in a gathering.

A. Who ought to receive, the elderly brothers or the gathering?

B. Elderly brethren with wisdom may seek to learn about the person, and give the gathering their judgment in the matter; yet it is the gathering, as such, that receives. (Matt. xviii, 18; Jno. xx, 23; Rom. xiv, 1; xv, 7. But there should be no undue haste. If one godly person has an objection, it ought to be seriously considered in the fear of God. And in "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit

in the bond of peace," we ought to know that persons coming are not only believers, but sound in the faith, godly in life, and free from evil associations, moral or doctrinal. If all are satisfied as to this, or with the testimony of brethren, who are competent to judge, there will be real and hearty fellowship, and no ground for anything like suspicion.

A. Ought we to treat people with suspicion?

B. In general, we ought not; but as gatherings have time and again been deceived, and the Lord's name dishonoured, we ought to have care, and seek to know enough of the person to be satisfied. See what care was exercised in Paul's case. (Acts ix). He was first received at Damascus, *vv.* 17-19, and in 26-28 we see the care at Jerusalem in receiving one, already in fellowship, but not known. Some testimony was required to witness that he was all right. Now see the lack of care in Gal. ii, 4; Jude iv. some "unawares brought in."

A. I see the importance of not acting in haste, and of being united in receiving persons, for part of our sorrow of late has been because some were brought in when all were not satisfied. A brother brought two or three persons to the meeting, and just before the bread was broken, announced their names. Many of the brethren felt quite unhappy about letting people come among us in this way.

B. No wonder they feel unhappy; but where a gathering is properly instructed as to what is becoming and orderly, such a custom could not be tolerated. Not long ago, I knew of a person being introduced just as the bread was passing round, and several did not know that the person ever professed conversion, and it caused much sorrow. Now there

is a way to avert all this. I am surprised that in our Bible readings week after week, these subjects are not looked into more frequently, and in love and grace made clear to the younger ones.

A. What is the proper way to receive?

B. When people desire Christian fellowship, according to the truth, and express that desire, the gathering ought to be informed, and the leading brothers should exercise their care and oversight. ~~If they are satisfied as to the case, they should make it known to the gathering, so that if one has a godly objection, because of wrong doctrine, or their walk, or associations, time is given to make it known to all.~~ Thus the glory of God is thought of, and earnest desire manifested to keep the gathering free from defilement. But where people are forced upon the gathering, just when they are assembled to remember the Lord (at a time when it would be wholly out of place to raise objections, as the enjoyment of the most impressive and solemn season would be marred, and perhaps offence given to the one who came, or to the one who brought them)—when there is no time given for enquiry, satisfying consciences, or waiting on God, it is because order and good, wise government are not understood.

A. What length of time ought to be given?

B. That depends largely upon the *person* and the *place*. In cities where the brethren live some distance apart, and cannot always attend the week-night meetings, the name of such as desire fellowship may be announced at the close of Lord's day morning meetings, when usually all are present. Thus, time is given through the week for enquiry, or for those who have objections to express them. In

this way unreliable persons are not received. In the country, or small places, less time may answer, to satisfy the brethren. But what is of all importance, is that there should be *care in each case*. And I am sure that no godly person would seek to gain admission if all were not clear.

Sometimes there are cases where a brother or sister has a friend or relative visiting them, who desires to remember the Lord for the time. They may be godly and devoted, but not clear on all points as we should like; yet they are not connected with any body of professed Christians, where heterodox doctrines are held or taught, and have no direct link of communion with such. Now if their case is mentioned to brethren the day before, or even on the Lord's day morning before their coming together, and all are happy, it is all well. But if some are not clear, nothing should be pressed. All should seek to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and nothing is lost by waiting upon each other. So you see the importance of there being order, and every possible care taken to avert confusion—especially upon the Lord's day morning when we are gathered to remember Him.

A. I wish all in our gathering saw this order and care, which would in no wise keep away any godly person, even if weak in the faith; but it must be known that they are godly, and in no way connected with heterodox doctrines. And there should be unity in all that is done, as far as possible.

B. That is truly the thought. I believe in every gathering of an ordinary number, brethren ought to come together about once a month (as they do in some places) to confer with one another on all sub-

jects that affect the honor of Christ, and the furtherance of the Gospel at home and abroad. And let us be more united in earnest prayer, that there may be deeper spirituality in all our gatherings, and more diligence in seeking the honor and glory of Christ; for I fear there are many gatherings which never rightly present to the eyes of the Church or the world that holy care and good government that becomes such a place. We often fail in shewing the piety and prayerfulness of our high profession; and if there was more true devotedness to Christ and His interests, there would be the power of the Spirit amongst us to suppress the working of the flesh. And if any were inclined to be unruly or contentious, they would feel miserable in such a place, and either be led to self-judgment, or to "cut themselves off," and go to their own company as the Apostle desired in Gal. v, 12. (Greek.)

A. How should strangers, who are not known, be received?

B. Look at Acts xviii, 24-28; Rom. xvi, 1-2; 2 Cor. iii, 1-2 for instruction as to that. Strangers must bring letters from whence they come, unless they are known by some in the gathering, and should be received only as commended by brethren who are *known*, or by Christians scripturally gathered. If this order is not observed, brethren should wait until satisfied of one's faith and life--then he is no longer a stranger, but is known.

A. Strangers are permitted to break bread sometimes without a letter.

B. Well, it shews little care for the honour of Christ. Suppose they were *Seventh Day Adventist* or *Christadelphians*, who hold and teach annihilation,

or others unsound in faith, morals or associations, how dishonouring this would be to Christ! No, Scripture has shewn us the necessity of exercising care in receiving, and that strangers should bring letters of commendation to guard against any link of connection with such evils. If some who sought admission in the Apostles' day and got in, because the assembly was off its guard, surely much greater care is needed now in these last days, when evil men "will wax worse and worse." (See 2 Tim., iii; 2 Pet., ii; and Jude.

A. Yes, I am convinced of the importance of all this.

B. But we have got on very little so far. To get all that is taught on government, we need to study all the Epistles carefully. How refreshing is Col. ii, 5! "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your *order*, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ." There is great need for loving pastoral care, as Jer-iii, 5 a blessed work, which will not be forgotten in "that day."

A. It is sometimes said, "Let us get sinners saved; the sheep will go to Heaven all right."

B. Yes, I have heard such remarks, and God forbid that we should ever cease to be a whole-hearted, enthusiastic, evangelistic people. May the Lord give us more and more of this holy zeal in the Gospel. But the Lord's work does not stop here. When a little child is born, then loving care commences—the feeding, clothing, instructing and guarding from evil. (1 Thess. ii, 7-11. In chapter i, 5 Paul preached as an evangelist; in chapter ii, 7 he acts as a nurse; and in verse 11 charges them

as a father. This work will never fit a soul for Heaven ; but it will fit them to witness more fully for the Lord on earth—to serve Him, and to walk in His holy ways.

Mrs. A. What a happy people we should be if these things were better understood, and we gave godly submission to one another.

B. And what a testimony for the Lord ! Eph. v, 21 and 1 Pet. v, 5 are good words for us in this line. In the epistle of Peter, government and submission are the main thoughts all through. The Apostle opens up our blessings in a wonderful way in chapter i-ii, 10, and then gives his exhortation. From v. 13-17, we get godly submission to the powers that be ; v. 18-25, godly subjection of servants to their masters ; and where there is suffering in their path Jesus is presented as an exmple for them—a perfect servant Himself. In chapter iii, 1-8, we get godly subjection of wives to their husbands, and Sarah (a princess) is quoted as an example. In chapter v, 1-4, the shepherds or elders are exhorted to diligence ; and in v. 5, we get godly submission of the younger to the elder. “ Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder, Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another.” (See R. V.)

A. I should like now a little on 1 Cor. v.

B. This is a solemn passage. Even a child of God may fall into some of these sins—that of *railing* for instance ; and the exhortation is : “ put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”

A. Can we deliver over to Satan now as in ver. 5 ?

B. No. The Apostle only had power to do this in certain cases, and so in v. 4, Paul says, “ When ye are gathered together, and *my spirit* ” (See also

1 Tim. i, 20). But now, though we have not the Apostle's spirit and power to deliver over to Satan, we are responsible to "put away from among ourselves that wicked person." (verse 13.)

A. How do you explain verse 7—"as ye *are* unlearned!" Would they be this, if they tolerated evil?

B. That expression gives us what is true of every believer. It is their perfect standing before God, by virtue of the work of Christ. This never changes. "He hath *perfected* forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x, 14); but this should never lead us to be careless or indifferent as regards evil either in our walk or associations. As a gathering before God, they were seen by Him in all the perfection of Christ, *i. e. unleavened*. And because of this, they were to "purge out the old leaven;" if not, they surely would be defiled, "For," he adds, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." If you carefully read Exod. xii, you will see that when the lamb was slain and brought in, then the leaven was put out. The two could not be together. Christ cannot tolerate evil. The same is seen in "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? what communion hath light with darkness? what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. vi, 14, 15.) So leaven should never be permitted to remain among a people of whom God says, "Ye are *unleavened*."

Mrs. A. Should a person thus put away, be received by another gathering?

B. Surely not. That would be a denial of true government and discipline intended by the Lord to produce holiness; and disorder, confusion, and every evil work, would follow. In the Apostle's day, there

might have been a hundred gatherings in a province or country, yet they were all viewed as one. (Acts ix, 31, R. V.) "Then had the Church rest throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria." It was but one Church, in which one authority was owned, in each place; one government, and one Lord in their midst; and God's principles and God's order abide the same, however much man may have failed.

A. Some call this sectarian, and clinging to a party.

B. We must always distinguish between what constitutes an assembly of God's people gathered according to Scripture, and that of a sect. In the former we ought to see God's order and government, while in a sect it is human order and government. How great the difference! In one we get the thoughts and ways of man; in the other the thoughts and ways of God as revealed in His Word. When once the character of an assembly is understood, these questions are easily settled; and order, holiness and reverence, will characterize those in such a place. Let us pray much that all who are truly gathered to the Lord, may be taught of God in these things. Government has seven different spheres, and so far we have only dwelt upon three—Self-government, Home government and Church-government.

4.—WORLD GOVERNMENT.

B. We will now look at the World Government, as it comes next in order. (See Gen. ix, 1-7; Rom. xiii, 1-7). From these passages we learn that the government of the earth was of God's appointment and this commenced with Noah (not Moses). For

want of a right understanding of this many have made serious mistakes, for instance in Rom. vi we read, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." Some have thought because this is so, there is no more need of civil law—government at all. But grace never frees us from government in any form. In Rom. vi "the law" refers to that which came in by Moses. This is no longer the rule of life for God's people, yet this does not imply that we are free from *responsibility*. If we carefully read Matt. v, we will see the difference between law and grace. Note with care every verse from 17-48, and the six contrasts marked by these words, "Ye have heard it was said by them of old" (law) "But I say unto you" (grace), and in every case the standard for us is raised, and more is expected from us. The grace of Christianity throws no door open for a low walk or looseness of any kind. (See also Rom. viii, 3,4.) Turning again to Rom. xiii, 1-7, we read "let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained (set up) of God." This, no doubt, refers to Gen. ix, where government was committed to Noah, and here it is the institution of God. "Who-soever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God."

A. Would it be right to punish a thief, and put a man to death for murder?

B. Read Gen. ix again, and you will get the answer, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." This was the word of God in Genesis, and the language of the New Testament is, "he (the powers) is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Rom.

xiii, 4), and can we not see the wisdom of God in this? If we had no government in the world, and evil not kept in check, it would be as before the flood, corruption and violence filling the earth. But even with "the powers," see the lawless condition of things in the earth. See also what the wise preacher wrote, "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Eccl. viii, 11.)

A. What is your thought as to Anarchism, Socialism, etc.?

B. They are the danger signals (or red lights) indicating "danger ahead." We see these classes in every country, and their object is to overthrow "government." 2 Pet. ii, 10; Jude 8, gives their character; "they despise government," and this is despising the ordinance of God.

A. May not those laws clash with God's, and in such cases would we be right in submitting to them?

B. When "the powers that be" frame laws which clash with the Word of God, there is a difference. For example in Dan. iii. Nebuchadnezzar commands all to worship his great image. But God's word to His people was, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image—Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them." (Exod. xx, 4-5.) Now in such a case, whose word were they to obey? God's surely, hence they were justified in saying "be it known to thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." This may enrage the king, and they be cast into the furnace, but God honors those who honor Him, and they were delivered. Another

example we get in the New Testament. (Acts iv, 19.) They command the Apostles not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. But the Lord had commanded otherwise, and so Peter and John answer, "whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto men more than unto God, judge ye." But these are exceptional cases, and Peter, the foremost in this case, writes by the Spirit, "submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well." (I Pet. ii, 13-17.)

The more carefully this subject is pursued, the more one learns that the evil (for there are evils) connected with those in authority is not because they punish evil-doers, but at times they are careless in doing so. "I saw under the sun, the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, and the place of righteousness that iniquity was there." (Eccl. iii, 16.) In such a place, those who govern ought to execute "justice and judgment," but many fail here. Some take bribes to blind the eyes, etc. This is a sore evil, and those things will grow worse *until He come*, when the government will be placed upon His shoulder, and He will be "the Governor among the nations." (Psa. xxii, 28; Isa. ix, 6-7.) At that time "justice and judgment" will be meted out to the people, and "when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." He will be King; the throne, the kingdom, the scepter, the crown, the government, all will be His. The whole world will then have good government according to the mind of God.

Until that time may Eccl. v, 8 ; 1 Tim. ii, 1-2, guide us.

Now reading 1 Pet. i, 17 ; Heb. xii, 5-11 we get

5.—THE FATHER'S GOVERNMENT

amongst those truly born of Him. Here we learn God has government *established* and which He maintains among those who are born of Him—His children. "My son, despise not thou the chastenings of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him, for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

In our natural relationship, we had our lessons to learn as children, we had to be taught, trained, guided and cared for by parents, who loved us and sought our welfare, and at times rebuked, at others scourged. But now we are the children of God and form part of His family. Heb. xii gives us the object and result of the Father's discipline and the key is, "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." When this relationship is rightly understood, and the *Father's Government*, many things become clear which otherwise would be obscure. The more valuable and precious the fruit of some trees causes the gardener to guard such with a zealous care. He prunes with a more careful hand, and is desirous of removing everything from the tree which would hinder the good, full, ripe fruit. What a cheer this is at times ! what a comfort for the children of God ! When thus tried and exercised under the Father's discipline, which is a necessary part of our Christian education, even if upon a bed of languishing, they can rest satisfied, He knoweth, He loveth, He careth, and it is He that is pruning and "chastening." So let the tried ones just remain passive in His

wise, tender, and yet all powerful hand. The knife will only remove what the husbandman knows will hinder the fruit he so much prizes and seeks for. The Father knows well as he watches the child when the lesson is learnt, he knows when to remove the book and lay aside the rod. "He maketh sore and bindeth up, he woundeth and his hands make whole." (Job v, 17-18.) And are not such, seasons of blessing for the Lord's people? What prayer! what dependence! what praise and devotion, and what a school-room the sick chamber often is! So the gardener sees the buds, blossom and fruit developing, the precious fruit of his toil. So the refiner sees his image reflected in the precious metal he is watching, and the Father sees the progress His child is making, which will fit him for some future and important work.

A. Would Heb. xii, the Father's discipline, be the same as I Cor. xi?

B. No, in I Cor. xi, 29-32, we have another sphere and while there is much of a paralell, yet there is a great difference also.

THE LORD'S GOVERNMENT.

The Lord Jesus is Son over God's House upon earth the Church, and with this we do not connect the name of *Father*, while in much the principles are the same. See also Rev. iii, 19 where we get the Lord Jesus in the midst of the seven assemblies, and in the character of Judge commending, what is right, and pointing out the wrong, and saying, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten;" but in the whole book, as has been noticed, we do not get the

name of *Father*, as bringing out our relationship to Him now.

But to return, believers in this dispensation are seen in a double relationship. We are in God's family as children, we are in the Church also, which is a very different truth. And in connection with the truth of the Church, as the house of God upon earth, all authority is given to the Lord Jesus, and He maintains government among His people. Heb. iii, 6 and 1 Cor. xi, are a sample of it. If the walk is careless, while He is full of grace, yet He corrects and chastens in righteousness; some of the Corinthians were sick, some had fallen asleep because their walk was bad. Now the Lord may and does permit sinners, unconverted people, to live carelessly, and they may suffer no punishment, perhaps, for their sins, (see Psa. lxxiii.), but their judgment they will get by and by. But He does not so deal with His people; they shall not come into judgment in that day, Jno. v, 24 assures us. Yet, if they grow careless, the Lord chastens, as in 1 Cor. xi. This forms part of His good, wise, and holy government, and no doubt Jas. v, 14-16 gives a further thought in this connection; wherein any under such discipline, see their wrong course, and confess it and are restored in heart to the Lord. There remains, then, no reason why they should not be even restored to health as before. But discernment in such cases is required, for some, as the Corinthians, may be taken home, and 1 Cor. iii, that such would be losers in that day when rewards are given, yet all will be saved who are born of God. The same principle is also taught in 1 Jno. v, 16-17.

A. These are solemn passages.

B. Very solemn indeed, and shew us that while it is wondrous and blessed to be God's people, saved with an everlasting salvation, yet our responsibilities also are great, and God's government in every sphere of life is a serious thought, and we need to know and understand it better. Then 2 Cor. xii, 7-10 continues this line of instruction; it is the Lord's special care for His servant. Paul might think he could do the Lord's work better without any infirmity, but the Lord knew best, and in his *wise* and *perfect* government, even allows Satan to fulfill His will, and hence this "thorn in the flesh" was "the messenger of Satan." And beautiful it is to see the resignation of the Apostle in verses 9, 10, when once he learns the will of the Lord concerning him.

We will now look briefly at one more sphere of government ere we close.

7.—THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD

not as *Father*, but as *God—God's Government*. He rules over all. "If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of justice and judgment in a province marvel not at the matter, for He that is higher than the highest regardeth and there be higher than they. (Eccl. v, 8.) Men may pervert judgment, and if they do, even God's people are not to resist. God *overrules all*. His eyes watch every movement of the nations. Soon they will have played their part in the great drama of time, and God will bring all to account, both rulers and subjects, and we can rest assured that even now God in His own government will make no mistakes. In many ways we might trace God's government, as God, from Genesis to Revelation, from Eternity to

Eternity, among the nations, among men, and even among His people. He raises up one nation, puts down another. (Ezek. xxi, 26-27; Dan iv, 17; Psa. lxxvi, 10.

Now if you read I Peter carefully, you will note in chapter i, 17 a reference to the Father's government. In chapter ii, 13-17 the government of the world, as ordained of God, in the hands of man. But in chapter iv, it is more the government of *God* as *God*, and in this He permits even powers as well as men to persecute His people, and make this world a scene of suffering for His people. But faith can always in circumstances like these recognize God as ruling over all, and even now share the path which the Lord trod when here, the path of suffering, with the glory in view. Much more we might say in regard to this subject, but if this opens to you but the outlines, you will find truth in detail coming up as you study the Word with more clearness.

A. I am truly thankful for all we have gone over upon government, but I have been made to feel since we commenced the subject, that increased light leads to increased responsibility.

B. Surely it does, and may we pray for ourselves as well as God's dear people everywhere, for increased exercise of *heart* and also *conscience* with regard to this, as every other line of ministry, that when He comes, we may truly answer to His word in Luke xii, 35-44: "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord."

A. E. BOOTH.