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Foundations for Life #10:

Legitimacy of Civil Government Inseparable from Duty to Protect Human Life: 7 Universal Principles

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When the American colonists set up free forms of civil government in the 1600s and 1700s, and then a national government between 1776 and 1791, they had certain beliefs and principles about civil government as their foundation. Although these are largely unknown or rejected today, if we want to restore our nation, we must rebuild this foundation. Here are **Seven Universal Principles of Civil Government** reflecting, or consistent with, the beliefs of the founding generations.

1. Origin and Need for Civil Government: When God created mankind, He made them good (Genesis 1:26-27, 31). After the Fall, within 10 generations, from Adam to Noah, the entire world became exceedingly corrupt and violent, except for Noah and his family whom the LORD found to be righteous. The Law of GOD had not been given, and there were no civil governments as we know them, to restrain evil and violence. GOD was the Judge, and He intervened with the Great Flood to judge the entire world (Genesis 6—8). Thus, the need for civil government arose to restrain evil because of our sinful nature. When the United States was being founded in 1776, Rev. Samuel West explained: “The necessity of forming ourselves into politic bodies, and granting to our rulers a power to enact laws for the public safety, and to enforce them by proper penalties, arises from our being in a fallen and degenerate state . . . civil government is absolutely necessary for the peace and safety of mankind.”

2. First Purpose of Civil Government: After the Global Flood, the LORD did a most gracious and benevolent act: He delegated some of His authority to mankind to punish evil and render justice. Genesis 9:5-6 reads: “Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man’s brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.” For this purpose, GOD authorized man to establish civil governments and the rule of law. Thus, *the first purpose of civil government is to exercise lawful authority that is delegated by God.*

3. Legitimacy of Civil Government is Inseparable from Duty to Protect Human Life: From the moment of the divine authorization for human civil government, that grant of authority was inseparable from the duty to protect innocent human life: “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man” (Genesis 9:6). The commandments of God further state: “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13; Leviticus 24:17). From its original authorization, *the legitimacy of civil government was inseparably linked to its duty to protect innocent human life and establish lawful justice*. Each government should create and enforce laws protecting human life from conception or fertilization to natural death.

4. Authority for Civil Government Comes through the People: To protect their lives, liberties, and property, God has given people the right to form a civil government, including by electing those who will be entrusted with that authority. In Deuteronomy 16, the LORD commanded: “Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God . . . You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes.” The judges and officers were chosen and elected by their own people, from within each tribe (e.g., each state).

5. Civil Government is to Establish the Rule of Law and Justice: Those entrusted with civil authority are responsible to establish just laws, enforce the rule of law, and ensure justice when someone is harmed because the law is violated. In Deuteronomy 16, the LORD commanded: “they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”

6. Lawful Authority to Encourage Good and Punish Evil: Those in civil government—legislative, executive, judicial, police, military—have a solemn duty to ensure that the laws and policies they make or enforce consistently encourage good or punish evil. When they do, they function as a “minister of God.” When they do not, they do not represent God. Romans 13 was not a description of government, for the Roman government was primarily the opposite. The Apostle Paul was giving the prescription of what GOD designed government to be.

7. Prohibiting Abortion is a Right Use of Civil Authority. Prohibiting abortion is the right use of civil authority as “a minister of God” to encourage what is good and be “an avenger” against “the one who practices evil” (Romans 13:1-4). Doing so restrains people from doing evil, and does not violate any legitimate right. Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan said, “We have the duty to protect the life of an unborn child.” He also said, “Make no mistake, abortion-on-demand is not a right granted by the Constitution.”

Pray that these self-evident and universal truths would be restored in the hearts and minds of Christians, leaders, and citizens in our and every nation, resulting in the restoration of righteous and just civil governments, protection of the sacred gift of human life, and an end to abortion.

For the LORD, the sacred gift of life, and remembrance of the babies,
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