**Separation of Church and State**

**SEPARATE FUNCTIONS ORDAINED BY GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

We need to remember that the Lord established both the civil government and the church. He gave each its own distinct sphere of operation. The government’s purposes are listed in *Romans 13:1-7*. The church’s purposes are listed in *Matthew 28:19-20*. “Each is sovereign within the sphere of the authority God has given to each of them.”- Clarence Sexton, the point is that neither should control the other and there should never be an alliance between the two.

1. **THIS DOCTRINE AS IT IS FOUND WITHIN THE BIBLE**
2. **Separation of church and state is as old as worship and government. At first, the two were one.** 
   1. Adam and Eve were directly under God’s authority.
   2. After the fall, we find the patriarchal stage of man’s history, where the father was the king over his children and servants.
   3. The father was the governmental head, as well as the spiritual head.
3. **When the law was given, there was separation.** 
   1. Israel established their first form of government in the wilderness when God appointed Moses as the head of the government and Aaron and his sons as the heads of worship.
   2. Though Moses could go directly to God, it was Aaron’s job to sacrifice for the people.
   3. There was a separation of function. This separation carried through all the days of the judges, to the selection of Saul as Israel’s first king.
   4. Examples of breeches in separation:
      1. *I Samuel 13:5-13* was the first breech of that separation. Saul overstepped his bounds and performed the priest’s job. Because of that disobedience, Saul lost the right for his son to inherit the throne.
      2. *II Chronicles 26:16-21* – Uzziah was taking the place of a priest. He was told to get out. He refused and God in judgement gave him leprosy.
      3. *Matthew 22:15-22* – Jesus pointed out two realms: Caesar and God. Each realm had its own authority, but the two were separate.
      4. *John 18:33-36* – In Jesus’ dialogue with Pilate, we see the separation between the two realms.
      5. *Acts 5:28-29* – We are to obey the higher authority, that of God, and not of men!
4. **When is it right to defy the government?** 
   1. If they dictate who we worship – *Daniel 3*
   2. If they dictate to whom we can pray – *Daniel 6*
   3. If they dictate our preaching – *Acts 4 & 5*
5. **THIS DOCTRINE AS IT IS FOUND IN OUR CONSTITUTION**
   1. **The first Amendment of the Bill of Rights**

1. The First Amendment states: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

2. The ten amendments in the Bill of Rights were written and facilitated by James Madison, who later became the fourth President of the United States. He is referred to by many historians as the father of our Constitution.

3. Madison studied in his early days at Princeton, planning for the ministry. Many of his closest lifelong friends were preachers he had gone to school with. When he went into politics, many objected that he was much more suited for the pulpit than politics.

4. Although Madison himself was not a Baptist, he had an experience with some Baptists that strongly shaped his opinions concerning religious liberty. One day, while out for a walk in the village of Orange, Virginia, he listened to sermons being preached by several Baptists to their congregations from a window in the cell in which they were confined because of their Baptist convictions. Madison said he had seen the excesses that can be perpetrated when one religion acts with the power of the government. As a lawyer and legislator, Madison devoted himself to changing and making laws that protected religious freedoms and separation of church and state.

5. Madison’s intent, when writing the First Amendment, was obviously not to keep God out of the government but to ensure that the government, or a church empowered by the government, could not impose restrictions upon religious freedoms.

* 1. **The phrase “separation of church and state” is not found in the Constitution, nor does the word “church” appear anywhere in the Constitution.** 
     + 1. The phrase came from a letter written in 1802 by President Thomas Jefferson to the Baptist Association of Danbury, Connecticut, in which Jefferson attempted to assure the persecuted Baptists of his endorsement of religious liberty. He wrote, “Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.”
       2. While the phrase has no doubt been misused over the years, it does express Jefferson’s belief that the First Amendment prohibits religious establishments by the federal government.
       3. The constitution places no restrictions upon the church whatsoever. The first amendment restricts the government to keep itself out of the affairs of the church.
  2. **All of this indicates a separation between church and state.** 
     + 1. The state has no authority over the church.
       2. The church is the higher authority of the two.
       3. The government should have no authority over the church, nor should the church have any authority over the government. When the state controls the church, the church becomes dependent upon the state and not God, thus the church has the wrong head. When the church controls the state, the state church persecutes all who disagree with it.
       4. This does not mean that believers cannot participate in government.

1. **THIS DOCTRINE AS IT IS FOUND IN BAPTIST HISTORY** 
   1. **The issue of separation of church and state has always been a Baptist issue.**
      * 1. Historically, our position as Baptists has been that those in government should individually worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience and understanding of God’s Word, and that they should administrate their office according to the Christian faith.
        2. Because we believe in individual soul liberty, we do not believe that the church should seek to control the state or have any authority over the state.
   2. **We ought to obey government as outlined in Scripture as an institution ordained by God.**
      * 1. However, that government should not be allowed to impose laws restricting the right to worship as the individual church believes, nor should government finance or empower any denomination which could impose its religious beliefs upon others.
        2. A study of Baptist history in America shows that many Baptists have been persecuted for this doctrine.

**CONCLUSION:**

With all the drama, wickedness, and corruption going on in our government today, it can be hard to respect, obey and pray for those who have been placed in office. However, we must remember that God instituted the government and the church. Even though there is a separation between church and state, He is interested and concerned about the events going on in government as He is in the church. From this lesson, you can see that there are reasons we believe as we do. As Baptists, we should not compromise on this important distinctive.