

# GOD'S EXPECTATIONS FOR RULERS

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## GOD'S EXPECTATIONS FOR RULERS

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Thus says the Lord: Execute justice and righteousness, and deliver him who is robbed out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence, to the foreigner, the fatherless, nor the widow; neither shed innocent blood in this place.

Jeremiah 2

### Scripture

places great responsibility on rulers to provide moral and transparent leadership, protection against violence and oppression, and a government dedicated to caring for the vulnerable, voiceless groups generally ignored by those in power. Under these conditions the public thrives and rejoices; without them the people become mired in mindless entertainments, moral excesses, and addictions of all kinds in a futile search for meaning in a culture that has seemingly forgotten them.

### Governments

are not all bad, as some extremists seem to believe. Nor are they all good, as others counter. They are as good as the people operating them and the basic principles guiding their actions. One of the great dangers facing people in power is the onset of hubris, or outrageous arrogance that destroys moral character, vision, and the willingness to provide justice for all people. Hubris blinds leaders to what people cry for in their suffering, alienated lives and hinders leaders in taking meaningful action to fulfill their promises.

And what is the source of these moral values that prove so vital to successful government? Theorists call them "natural law," or those rules and concepts so universal as to be beyond question. The natural law itself arises from beliefs generated far back in history as philosophers debated ideas originating in the religious institutions and leaders of the day. So at the root of justice, morality, truthfulness, decency, and mercy lay the commandments of Almighty God for human rule and government.

One of these

is God's instruction that "He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord. And he shall be like the light of the morning...without clouds...as the earth clearly shines after rain" (2 Sam.23:3-4). Righteous rule brings justice, peace and joy to the people, who then view it as the light of a new day dawning. The opposite we've been experiencing in many areas of national life as increasingly angry hordes of middle and working class voters realize that neither political party has their best interests in mind. Panaceas and promises are no longer enough: directed, moral action is crucially needed.

#### President-elect

Donald Trump promised such concern for the vulnerable during his campaign. It now remains to be seen whether he can or will deliver. Truly standing for and with forgotten Americans will require fortitude and character not normally associated with politicians---that realm is for statesmen or women. In order to truly make a difference the in-coming president will have to face a deeply entrenched financial system that up to now has been operated by the rich for the rich. He or she will also struggle with the captains of industry, many of whom consider labor to be merely another factor of production to be exploited at will. They operate under the credo that the only fiduciary (a fixed base of reference between someone who owns property and another who manages it) duty they have to stockholders is to return as many dividends to them as possible. The extreme position in this equation is of course the corporate titan who forces wages to starvation levels, minimizes safety rules, destroys natural resources and flouts laws, all for the purpose of increasing profits and dividends.

#### These

enemies plus many others are giants to be faced by anyone seriously attempting to deliver the poor and vulnerable from the heavy boot of historic, entrenched oppression. It could be done, but it would need guidance from above plus a leader willing to endure massive attacks by words and money, plus a Congress able to set aside political considerations long enough to pass needed legislation.

#### I'm not very

optimistic, since I don't yet see anybody on the political scene willing to learn what God says and to endure the risks of carrying it out. But it will come as its time arrives.