

When People Are Held Hostage?

The word hostage is usually associated with criminal acts, people seized and used as leverage to force demands. Yet Scripture reveals that people can also be placed in harms way, not only by violent acts, but by the failure of those in authority to do what is right.

Consider first the Israelites in Egypt. Under Pharaoh, an entire nation was held in bondage, their freedom restricted and their lives controlled. Their suffering was prolonged not because deliverance was impossible but because a ruler refused to act justly. Exodus records how Pharaoh, when confronted with truth hardened his heart, and the people suffered as a result. *Exodus 1-12*.

Later, during the Babylonian captivity, faithful servants of God again found themselves under the authority of rulers who demanded what was wrong. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were commanded under threat of death to bow before an image set up by King Nebuchadnezzar. *Daniel 3*. They were told to comply or perish. This was not justice; it was coercion and abuse of authority by those who in power that placed innocent lives in danger.

These examples reveal a sobering truth. When those in positions of authority act unjustly and fail to act when they should, innocent people pay the price.

We are witnessing a modern reflection of this principle. When governing authorities possess the power to provide what is necessary for the safety and protection of the people, yet delay or withhold that provision, especially the withholding of funds, the consequences are real. When those tasked with defending the public, maintaining order, and guarding against threats are left without the support or compensation they need, both they and the people they serve are placed in a position of vulnerability. This is not merely a political issue. It is a moral one.

Scripture is clear about the role of government. *“For he is God’s minister to you for good...an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.”* Romans 13:4. Those entrusted with authority are given that role by God for the purpose of promoting good and restraining evil. When that responsibility is neglected, whether through conflict, delay, or refusal, the very purpose of that authority is undermined.

Furthermore, the Bible directly condemns the withholding of what is rightfully due. Proverbs 3:27-28 says, *“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so...Do not say...‘tomorrow I will give it,’ when you have it with you.”*

When individuals labor to protect and serve, and the means to support them is intentionally delayed or withheld, this principle is violated. It is not simply inefficiency; it is a failure of responsibility. James speaks even more strongly about this kind of injustice. James 5:4 warns, *“Indeed the wages of the laborers...which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries...have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”* God hears when provision is withheld.

He sees when those who serve are left in uncertainty. And He does not regard such matters lightly.

As Christians, we must be careful not to allow our thinking to be shaped only by political language. We are called to evaluate actions by the standard of God's Word. When those with the power to act choose not to act, and others are put at risk as a result, it is right to recognize the seriousness of that failure.

At the same time our response must remain rooted in faith. We are commanded in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, "*that supplications, prayers, intercessions...be made.... for kings and all who are in authority.*" We pray not because everything is right, but because much is at stake. Where there is confusion, neglect and delay, we pray for wisdom, action and accountability.

Finally, we remember that while human systems may fail, God does not. And beyond all physical dangers, there is a greater captivity that threatens every soul. Jesus said in John 8:36, "*Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*" Even in times of uncertainty, our ultimate security is not in governments, but in God. Yet that truth does not excuse injustice, it calls us to recognize it, measure it by Scripture, and respond as people of truth.

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