
A GREEN LIGHT FROM OBAMA

Last week, President Obama met with a number of religious leaders, encouraging them to talk to their people about the proposed health care reform that has dominated recent news programs and political attention. One of Obama's points was to claim the immorality of neighbor not helping neighbor, as if the proposed health care changes would remedy this. Here is a quote from a news report:

"These are all fabrications that have been put out there in order to discourage people from meeting what I consider to be a core ethical and moral obligation. That is that we look out for one another, that I am my brother's keeper and I am my sister's keeper," Obama said, using a phrase drawn from the Bible.

Since Obama has recruited preachers to speak out on the morality of this subject, I feel that I have been given permission to state my feelings about this subject. The purpose of this article is not to express my political opinion but to teach what the scriptures say. In a health care bill over 1000 pages long, it is not surprising that there are elements of it that would touch on some principles found within the scriptures. Many people have read the bill and have many moral concerns about it. Time and space prevent me from saying too much about everything, so I will do what I can with the resources I have. I hope to deal with some things in the Bill H.R. 3200 in the next week or so.

In the meantime, I would like to consider the morality of helping others. Jesus said that we need to help those who are in need (**Luke 10:30-37**) when we have opportunity (**Galatians 6:10**). **James 1:26-27** also tells us that this is an essential element of our individual responsibility. Contrary to nearly universal assumption, this is not even the church's collective responsibility. **1 Timothy 5:16** clearly distinguishes between individual and collective responsibilities concerning the burdens we are to bear. It is also not the government's responsibility. **Romans 13:1-7** clearly expresses the purpose for government. It is to punish the evil doer, the law breaker so that there will be social order. It is not to usurp the privileges and responsibilities of the citizen, church, or home. Confusion and every evil thing crop up in the unintended consequences of not respecting God's order.

For example, fasting and celibacy are both encouraged and upheld by scripture as beneficial spiritual sacrifices (**Matthew 6:16-18** and **1 Corinthians 7:1-7**). This is because it is to be done voluntarily from a free-will heart. When the same things are imposed by the church, it is a demonic doctrine that robs the individual of his individual will, responsibility, privilege and reward (**1 Timothy 4:1-5**). The church overstepped its bounds in its apostasy. In the same way, what is highly moral (helping the needy) becomes immoral when the government imposes upon individuals to take their earnings and use them in its way in the name of compassion when it in reality prevents compassion from being exercised by the individual. The government has overstepped its bounds.

If the Lord wills, I will have more to say about moral issues involved with this legislation.