

# God, Government, and the South African Crisis

## A Biblical Analysis of State Capture, Institutional Destruction, and the Church's Response

Grounded in Romans 13 as Expounded by Pastor Gary Hamrick Reference Dataset: South Africa — Institutions Dismantled or Destroyed by Government (1994–2026)

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### Executive Summary

This report examines the systemic dismantling of South African state institutions between 1994 and 2026 through the biblical framework of government established in Romans 13, as expounded by Pastor Gary Hamrick in his sermon *"God and Government."* The analysis demonstrates a profound and sustained conflict between the South African government's actions — characterized by corruption, state capture, and the attempted regulation of religious freedom — and its God-ordained mandate to "cultivate the good" and "punish the evil." The report identifies specific incidents from the documented record of 34 institutional failures that directly contradict the biblical principles articulated in the sermon. It concludes by outlining the proper standpoint for the South African Christian community in the face of this sustained governmental overreach, calling the church to reclaim its prophetic voice, resist state encroachment, and actively engage the public sphere from a foundation of unchanging biblical truth.

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## Part I: The Biblical Foundation — Romans 13 and the God-Ordained Purpose of Government

### 1.1 The Sermon's Core Theological Framework

Pastor Gary Hamrick's exposition of Romans 13 in his sermon *"God and Government"* establishes a clear and coherent theology of the state that serves as the analytical foundation for this report. The sermon's key theological principles are as follows.

**The Institution of Government is God-Ordained.** Romans 13:1 declares that "there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." Hamrick is careful to distinguish between the *institution* of government, which is always legitimate because God ordained it, and the *actions* of the individuals holding office, which can be deeply illegitimate and evil. He illustrates this by noting that when Paul wrote Romans 13, the Roman Emperor was Nero — a tyrant who burned Christians alive as human torches — yet Paul still recognized the institution of government as God-

ordained. This distinction is critical: the Christian does not owe blind obedience to corrupt individuals; rather, the Christian respects the *office* while holding the *officeholder* accountable to the standard for which that office was created.

**The Government's Two Core Mandates.** Romans 13:3-4 assigns government two primary, non-negotiable responsibilities. First, to **cultivate the good** — to maintain a healthy society, promote the general welfare, and praise and reward those who do good works. Second, to **punish the evil** — to act as "an avenger to execute wrath" on those who practice evil. Rulers are meant to be a terror to bad conduct, not to good conduct. Hamrick notes that the Preamble to the United States Constitution mirrors these biblical responsibilities precisely, but the principle is universal: any government that inverts this mandate — that protects evil and punishes good — has forfeited its moral legitimacy, even if it retains its legal authority.

**The Danger of a Godless Government.** When a government neglects God, it attempts to become its own moral authority. This leads to subjective morality, where laws are based on the shifting winds of public opinion rather than the unchanging, objective truth of God's Word. The result is a state that progressively loses its moral compass, enabling corruption, injustice, and the abuse of power to flourish unchecked.

**The Duty of Obedience and the Right of Civil Disobedience.** As a general rule, Christians must obey the law for "conscience's sake" and to avoid the punishment of the government. However, Christians are not only free but *obligated* to disobey the government whenever the "lower law of man conflicts with the higher law of God." Hamrick cites the Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1), Daniel (Daniel 6), Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 3), and Peter and John (Acts 5:29) as biblical examples of righteous civil disobedience. He also cites his own church's decision to reopen during COVID-19 lockdowns when the government permitted strip clubs and abortion clinics to operate while keeping churches closed. Critically, the Christian engaging in civil disobedience must be prepared to accept the earthly consequences.

**The Call to Active Engagement.** Christians must not retreat from the public square. They are called to push back against unbiblical mandates, vote for leaders who respect biblical values, and actively pray for all government officials, that God would move their hearts to do what is pleasing to Him.

## 1.2 The Hamrick Test: A Diagnostic Framework

Based on the sermon's theological principles, a diagnostic framework can be derived for evaluating any government's alignment with its God-ordained mandate:

Diagnostic Question	Biblical Standard (Romans 13)
Does the government protect and reward those who do good?	Yes — rulers are to be "not a terror to good conduct" (Rom. 13:3)
Does the government punish those who do evil?	Yes — the ruler is "an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer" (Rom. 13:4)

<b>Diagnostic Question</b>	<b>Biblical Standard (Romans 13)</b>
Does the government promote the general welfare of its citizens?	Yes — government is to "cultivate the good" for all
Does the government operate under an objective moral standard?	Yes — subjective morality leads to institutional collapse
Does the government respect the conscience and religious freedom of its citizens?	Yes — when it does not, civil disobedience is justified
Does the government use its power to protect itself from accountability?	No — this is a direct inversion of the Romans 13 mandate

## **Part II: The South African Reality — A Systematic Inversion of the Divine Mandate (1994–2026)**

### **2.1 Overview of the Documented Record**

The dataset "*South Africa: Institutions Dismantled or Destroyed by Government (1994–2026)*" documents 34 distinct incidents of institutional dismantling, capture, or destruction spanning 32 years of democratic governance. These incidents span anti-corruption bodies, prosecutorial authorities, state-owned enterprises, financial oversight institutions, broadcasting, social security, parliamentary oversight, and constitutional bodies. The Zondo Commission (2018–2022) estimated R57 billion in direct state capture losses, while the broader economic damage — through load-shedding, collapsed public transport, and the FATF grey-listing — runs into the trillions of rands.

The incidents fall into four primary categories, each of which directly conflicts with a specific principle of the Romans 13 mandate:

<b>Category of Failure</b>	<b>Biblical Mandate Violated</b>	<b>No. of Incidents</b>
Dismantling anti-corruption and prosecutorial bodies	Punish the evil	10
Capturing state-owned enterprises and public finance	Cultivate the good / general welfare	10
Undermining constitutional oversight and accountability	Accountability to a higher standard	8
Attacking media, social security, and human rights	Protect citizens from harm	6

## 2.2 Incident-by-Incident Conflict Analysis

The following table maps each documented incident against the specific Romans 13 principle it violates, as articulated in the Hamrick sermon.

No.	Period	Institution	Hamrick Principle Violated	Nature of Conflict
1	1994–2001	SAPS Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU)	<b>Punish the evil</b>	Closure of the internal police anti-corruption watchdog removed a critical layer of accountability. Government failed its mandate to be a "terror to bad conduct."
2	2002–2009	Office of the Public Protector (Mushwana Era)	<b>Accountability to higher standard</b>	Refusal to investigate presidential conduct and ANC officials neutralized constitutional oversight. The institution was captured to protect evil rather than expose it.
3	Sep 2007	NPA — Vusi Pikoli Suspension	<b>Punish the evil</b>	A competent, independent prosecutor was suspended for pursuing corruption cases against powerful officials. Government directly protected evil by removing those who punished it.
4	2008–2009	Directorate of Special Operations (Scorpions) — Disbanded	<b>Punish the evil</b>	The most effective anti-corruption unit in South African history was disbanded through parliamentary legislation after it investigated ANC officials. A direct inversion of the mandate to punish evil.
5	May 2009	NIA & SASS — Merged into SSA	<b>Accountability to higher standard</b>	The merger created a single intelligence agency that was subsequently weaponized as a presidential protection tool, removing checks and balances from intelligence oversight.
6	2009–2012	NPA — Menzi Simelane Appointment (Invalidated)	<b>Punish the evil</b>	A politically compliant NDPP was appointed to neutralize prosecutions of the corrupt. The Constitutional Court's subsequent invalidation confirmed systematic executive abuse.
7	Mar 2011	Hawks/DPCI — Declared Unconstitutional	<b>Punish the evil</b>	The replacement for the Scorpions was structured to be less independent, directly undermining the state's capacity to punish powerful wrongdoers.
8	2011–2018	SAPS Crime Intelligence — Richard Mdluli Capture	<b>Punish the evil</b>	Crime Intelligence was captured to serve political interests, enabling corruption within the police to flourish and weaponizing state intelligence against political opponents.
9	2012–2017	SAA Board — Dudu Myeni Capture	<b>Cultivate the good</b>	The capture of South African Airways led to billions in losses and the eventual collapse of the national carrier, directly harming the general welfare of citizens.
10	2012–2018	SAPS National Commissioner — Serial Leadership Collapse	<b>Punish the evil</b>	A succession of compromised National Commissioners ensured that the primary law enforcement body could not fulfill its mandate to punish evil and protect citizens.

No.	Period	Institution	Hamrick Principle Violated	Nature of Conflict
11	2013–2015	NPA — Mxolisi Nxasana Forced Out	<b>Punish the evil</b>	A prosecutor who sought independence was forced out through a golden handshake, confirming the pattern of executive interference to protect the corrupt from prosecution.
12	2014–2018	SARS — Tom Moyane Capture	<b>Cultivate the good</b>	The capture of the revenue service cost South Africa an estimated R50 billion in lost tax revenue, directly undermining the state's capacity to fund public welfare.
13	2014–2019	SASSA — CPS Contract Crisis	<b>Cultivate the good / Protect citizens</b>	The social security agency's governance collapse threatened the welfare grants of 17 million South Africans, the most vulnerable citizens the state is mandated to protect.
14	2015–2016	IPID — Robert McBride Suspension	<b>Punish the evil</b>	The suspension of the head of the police watchdog for investigating police corruption is a direct inversion of the mandate to punish evil.
15	2015–2017	Denel SOE Board — Gupta Capture	<b>Cultivate the good</b>	The capture of the state arms manufacturer enabled the extraction of billions through irregular procurement, destroying a strategic national asset.
16	2015–2018	NPA — Shaun Abrahams Appointment (Invalidated)	<b>Punish the evil</b>	A compliant NDPP was used to weaponize prosecutions against political opponents (e.g., Finance Minister Gordhan) while shielding the corrupt. The Constitutional Court confirmed systematic abuse.
17	2015–2017	SABC — Hludi Motsoeneng Capture	<b>Protect citizens / Free conscience</b>	The capture of the public broadcaster destroyed editorial independence, censored protest coverage, and eliminated the public's access to independent information — a direct attack on the free conscience of citizens.
18	2015–2017	National Treasury — Nene Firing, Gordhan Dismissal	<b>Cultivate the good</b>	The firing of Finance Ministers who resisted capture triggered a R500 billion market crash and destroyed fiscal oversight integrity, causing massive harm to the general welfare.
19	2016–2018	Public Protector — State of Capture Report Defied	<b>Accountability to higher standard</b>	Executive defiance of constitutional remedial action normalized contempt for the rule of law, directly contradicting the principle that rulers are accountable to a higher standard.
20	2015–2018	Eskom Board — Gupta/Zuma Capture	<b>Cultivate the good</b>	The capture of Eskom led to R400+ billion in debt and endemic load-shedding costing an estimated 2% of GDP annually — a catastrophic failure to provide for the general welfare.
21	2011–2019	Transnet Board — Gupta/Zuma Capture	<b>Cultivate the good</b>	Billions extracted through irregular locomotive and infrastructure contracts destroyed the freight rail network, harming economic welfare and the livelihoods of millions.

No.	Period	Institution	Hamrick Principle Violated	Nature of Conflict
22	2012–2019	PRASA — Lucky Montana Era	<b>Cultivate the good</b>	The collapse of the passenger rail agency destroyed public transport for millions of commuters, disproportionately harming the poor — the very citizens the state is mandated to protect.
23	2016–2023	Public Protector — Busisiwe Mkhwebane Era	<b>Accountability to higher standard</b>	The deliberate weaponization of the Public Protector's office to pursue political opponents while shielding the corrupt represented a complete inversion of its constitutional mandate.
24	2017–2022	State Security Agency (SSA) — Presidential Protection Tool	<b>Punish the evil / Protect citizens</b>	The SSA was used to spy on political opponents and journalists, turning the state security apparatus against citizens rather than protecting them.
25	2018–2021	Public Investment Corporation (PIC) — Dan Matjila Scandal	<b>Cultivate the good</b>	Governance failures at the PIC, which manages R2 trillion in public pension funds, put the retirement savings of government employees at risk.
26	2018–2021	Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors (IRBA) — Governance Crisis	<b>Accountability to higher standard</b>	The governance crisis at IRBA, triggered by the KPMG and Gupta audit scandal, undermined the integrity of financial reporting across the public and private sectors.
27	2019–2020	Land Bank — Governance Collapse	<b>Cultivate the good</b>	The governance collapse and debt default of the Land Bank threatened agricultural financing for thousands of farmers, undermining food security and rural welfare.
28	2009–2022	Parliamentary Oversight (SCOPA) — ANC Majority Capture	<b>Accountability to higher standard</b>	The capture of parliamentary oversight committees by the ANC majority removed the legislature's ability to hold the executive accountable, destroying the separation of powers.
29	2020–2026	NSFAS — Serial Governance Collapse	<b>Cultivate the good</b>	Repeated governance failures at the student financial aid scheme denied hundreds of thousands of poor students access to higher education, betraying the state's welfare mandate.
30	2023–2025	FATF Grey Listing	<b>Cultivate the good</b>	South Africa's grey-listing by the Financial Action Task Force due to failures in combating money laundering and terrorist financing damaged the country's international standing and economic access.
31	Aug 2023	IPID — Proposed Weakening via Amendment Bill	<b>Punish the evil</b>	The proposed amendment to centralize IPID appointment powers in the Police Minister represents a renewed legislative attempt to capture the police watchdog.
32	Apr 2026	SAHRC — Binding Powers Removed by ConCourt	<b>Protect citizens</b>	The removal of the Human Rights Commission's binding powers stripped citizens of enforceable human rights protection, fundamentally undermining the constitutional promise of dignity.

No.	Period	Institution	Hamrick Principle Violated	Nature of Conflict
33	Jun 2025	Special Investigating Unit (SIU) — Severe Underfunding	<b>Punish the evil</b>	Deliberate underfunding of the primary asset recovery body limits South Africa's capacity to recover state capture losses, effectively allowing evil to go unpunished.
34	1994–2026	Cadre Deployment System — Systemic Institutional Destruction	<b>All mandates violated</b>	The ANC's cadre deployment policy systematically replaced merit with political loyalty across every institution, enabling corruption to flourish unchecked across the entire state apparatus. The Constitutional Court's 2024 ruling confirmed its unconstitutionality.

## Part III: The Direct Conflict with the Hamrick Framework

### 3.1 The Government Has Become a "Terror to Good Conduct"

Pastor Hamrick states clearly that "rulers are meant to be a terror to bad conduct, not to good conduct" (Romans 13:3). The South African record demonstrates a systematic inversion of this principle. Prosecutors who pursued corruption (Pikoli, Nxasana) were removed. Finance Ministers who protected the public purse (Nene, Gordhan) were fired. The head of the police watchdog (McBride) was suspended for investigating police corruption. The head of the revenue service who resisted capture was replaced with a loyalist. In every case, those who did good were terrorized, and those who did evil were protected.

This is not a failure of governance; it is an active inversion of the Romans 13 mandate. The state became the instrument of evil rather than its avenger.

### 3.2 The Government Has Abandoned the General Welfare

The mandate to "cultivate the good" encompasses the provision of essential services, the protection of public assets, and the promotion of the general welfare. The capture of Eskom, Transnet, PRASA, SAA, and SASSA represents a catastrophic failure in this regard. The consequences are not abstract: 17 million South Africans had their welfare grants threatened; millions of commuters lost reliable public transport; the country endures daily load-shedding that costs the economy billions annually; and hundreds of thousands of poor students were denied access to higher education.

As Hamrick notes, the government's purpose is to enable "a free, prosperous, and orderly society." The South African government's actions have produced the opposite: a society characterized by poverty, disorder, and the erosion of freedom.

### 3.3 The Government Has Rejected Objective Moral Authority

Hamrick warns that "when a government neglects God, it attempts to become its own moral authority," leading to subjective morality. The cadre deployment system, which replaced merit with political loyalty, is the institutional embodiment of this subjective morality. The standard for appointment was not competence or integrity — the objective standard — but political loyalty, a subjective and self-serving one. The result, as the Constitutional Court confirmed in 2024, was unconstitutional and led to the hollowing out of every institution of the state.

### 3.4 The Government Is Now Encroaching on the Church

The most recent and direct conflict with the Hamrick framework is the CRL Rights Commission's Section 22 process, which seeks to establish a regulatory framework for the Christian sector. The resignation of the Section 22 committee chair, Reverend Professor Musa Xulu, in January 2026 is particularly telling. He stated that he "could no longer serve as chair of a committee the processes of which I do not control, the outcomes of which I do not endorse," alleging that the committee was being used to advance a "predetermined agenda of state control of religion."

This is precisely the scenario Hamrick addresses: when the state mandates that the church operate under its authority, the "lower law of man conflicts with the higher law of God," and the church is obligated to resist. The thousands of Christians who marched in Durban and other cities in 2025 and 2026 were, in the Hamrick framework, exercising their biblical right and duty to resist state overreach.

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## Part IV: The Standpoint of the South African Christian Community

### 4.1 The Historical Failure: A Church That Went Silent

To understand the current crisis, one must acknowledge the church's own failure. During the apartheid era, the South African church — through bodies like the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and leaders like Desmond Tutu, Beyers Naudé, and Frank Chikane — possessed a powerful and unified prophetic voice against injustice. However, after 1994, the church largely demobilized. As former President Thabo Mbeki himself lamented at an Anglican Conference in 2013: "The church was one of the principal fighters for liberation but has now become demobilised. It has distanced itself from responding as it used to respond to national challenges and has disappeared somewhere over the horizon."

Academic research confirms this assessment. Dr. Kelebogile Thomas Resane notes that "the gap between the Church and the state was felt when corruption escalated in the midst of the silence of the Churches." A 2024 study in *HTS Theological Studies* identifies six reasons for this failure, including political co-optation, a false sense of "arrival" after 1994, and a retreat from prophetic engagement.

Despite more than 80% of South Africa's population identifying as Christian, this demographic strength has not translated into a cohesive and impactful presence in the public sphere. The church's silence has been a contributing factor to the very institutional collapse documented in this report.

## 4.2 The Biblical Call: What the Church Must Do Now

Drawing directly from the Hamrick sermon and the broader biblical witness, the South African Christian community must adopt the following standpoint:

**Reclaim the Prophetic Voice.** The church must unequivocally and publicly condemn corruption, state capture, and the dismantling of justice institutions. A church silent in the face of systemic evil is not fulfilling its mandate to be the "salt and light" of society (Matthew 5:13-14). The prophetic tradition of the Hebrew midwives, Daniel, and Peter and John — all of whom spoke truth to power at personal cost — must be recovered.

**Distinguish the Institution from the Officeholder.** Following Hamrick's framework, Christians must not conflate respect for the institution of government with blind obedience to corrupt officeholders. The institution of government is God-ordained; the actions of individuals who have captured and corrupted that institution are not. Christians can and must hold the latter accountable while respecting the former.

**Resist State Encroachment on Religious Freedom.** The CRL Rights Commission's Section 22 process represents a direct challenge to the church's autonomy and its ability to speak objective truth to power. In accordance with the biblical principle of civil disobedience when state law conflicts with God's law, the church must actively and legally resist any attempt to regulate religious doctrine and practice. The church must maintain its independence as the conscience of the state. As Peter and John declared: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

**Embrace Dual Citizenship.** As The Gospel Coalition Africa argues, Christians must recognize that their primary citizenship is in heaven, which demands adherence to a higher moral standard. This dual citizenship is not a reason to disengage from earthly affairs; on the contrary, it is the foundation for principled engagement. The hope of the coming Saviour-King, who will right all wrongs, empowers the Christian to oppose corruption without despair and to model integrity without compromise.

**Engage Actively and Prepare for the Cost.** Christians must vote for leaders who respect the rule of law and biblical values, support civil society organizations that hold the government accountable, and actively pray for all government officials. They must also be prepared to face the earthly consequences of standing for truth. As Hamrick emphasizes, civil disobedience may bring fines, job loss, or imprisonment — but the Christian is called to accept these consequences rather than compromise the higher law of God.

**Call for a National Convention.** In line with the recommendation of *HTS Theological Studies*, the South African church should convene a national convention of Christian leaders to craft a unified vision for the country's future, foster dialogue and cooperation, and present a coherent prophetic voice to the government and the nation. The church's 83% demographic majority in South Africa is a resource that, if mobilized with biblical integrity, could be a transformative force for justice and renewal.

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## Conclusion

The 34 incidents documented in the dataset "*South Africa: Institutions Dismantled or Destroyed by Government (1994–2026)*" constitute a comprehensive and damning indictment of a government that has systematically failed its God-ordained mandate. Measured against the Romans 13 framework expounded by Pastor Gary Hamrick, the South African government has inverted its purpose: it has protected evil rather than punishing it, harmed the general welfare rather than cultivating it, rejected objective moral authority in favor of political loyalty, and is now encroaching on the very religious freedom that enables the church to serve as the conscience of the state.

The Christian community in South Africa stands at a critical juncture. The post-1994 silence of the church has been costly — not only to the nation, but to the church's own integrity and witness. The biblical call is clear: to reclaim the prophetic voice, to resist state overreach with courage and conviction, to engage the public square with the unchanging truth of God's Word, and to prepare for the cost of doing so. The God who raised up the Hebrew midwives, Daniel, and the apostles to speak truth to power in their generations is the same God who calls the South African church to speak truth to power in this one.

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