

TRUE FREEDOM

I was recently participating in a class on the United States Constitution and the instructor was discussing how through the years the U. S. Supreme Court had ruled one way on a particular issue, then reversed their decision later, usually depending on the political climate. He then read from an essay written by Mr. Lysander Spooner, a Boston attorney who had volunteered to defend, pro bono, Jefferson Davis following the Civil War, laying out the anarchist foundation of his defense. As he read this essay, I had a realization come to me that even though I have studied God's law for many years, I have never really come to appreciate true freedom as only the Israelites had after they entered and settled the land of Canaan following the Exodus.

This freedom is what God has promised when His Kingdom is fully implemented on earth, but to understand it, we have to understand what He provided for the Israelites at that time. The government they had is often referred to as a Theocratic Republic. According to Webster's 1828 dictionary, Theocratic means "administrated by the immediate direction of God." Republic means, "a state in which the exercise of the sovereign power is lodged in representatives elected by the people." The government of Israel was a combination of these two, it was administered by the immediate direction of God in that He gave Israel the law system by which they were to conduct themselves, and they elected representatives to administer this government. These representatives were called judges. Their job was not to legislate. God did the legislating. Neither were they in an administrative position such as Moses and Joshua were through the Exodus and the conquering the land of Canaan. God was the administrator. Their job was settling arguments and rendering justice when the law was violated. Every man was free to do as he wanted so long as he obeyed God's law.

God was their protector. They did not need an army so long as they were obedient. God promised them good health so long as they obeyed His laws, so there was no need for medical care for sickness. Their society was basically an agrarian society, so they were pretty much self employed. God promised good weather so long as they obeyed, so they did not have to worry about catastrophic weather related events.

The law itself, as given to Moses at Mt. Sinai, was designed to protect man against himself, and those around him. It also protected the people around a person from that person. The food laws, as given in Leviticus 11, are an example of laws protecting man against himself. Freedom is dependent on good health, and good health is dependent on what man eats. Examples of laws for protection from those around a person, and them from that person, are

found in the last six of the Ten Commandments. No person has the right to intentionally harm another person. As the saying goes, “the other fellow’s rights end where my nose begins.”

We look at these types of laws as commandments. Not only are they found in the Ten Commandments, but are further illustrated by laws found throughout the books of the law that explain the application of such laws in principle in different circumstances. The laws are given in principle form and not intended to detail every circumstance or situation. These laws require each person to be responsible for their actions.

Another part of the law system God gave the Israelites are Judgments. These are the penalties for violation of the commandments. Rather than penalties such as prison time, the judgments are restorative in nature. Their intent is to be sure that anyone who has been damaged, either intentionally or accidentally, by someone else is compensated so that they are made whole again, or better. A judge could not arbitrarily sentence a person. The judge’s job was to determine guilt or innocence and the circumstances surrounding the damage. Once this was determined, either by the judge himself or by a jury, the principle of judgment had already been determined and stated by God and was to be executed by the judge.

This is a very brief look at the law system under which the people dwelt. God appointed one tribe to be priests. Though Aaron and his descendents were selected from among this tribe to be the chief priests, or the ecclesiastical leaders, most of the Levites were “government workers” who took care of what we call today bureaucratic jobs. They were to be compensated by a “tax” of ten percent of a man’s increase each year. For example, if a farmer gained fifty more sheep this year than he had the previous year, his tax, or tithe was five sheep. These were to be given to the Levites who worked with his family, or his community. The widows and the poor were to be provided for, but they still had to work for what they got, by gleaning the corners of the farmer’s field for example. A person was compensated for what he did, not for what someone else did. The rich got rich because they worked for it. The poor were poor because they didn’t work as they should. The economy was a production based economy. Charging interest on money was strictly forbidden. Provision was made for those who, for whatever reason, incurred a debt that they couldn’t pay, to work off their debt, but everyone was to be released from their debt every forty-nine years, so there was no way to build up huge debt generation after generation, nor could a man permanently lose his land.

The point I want to make is that there has never been a people under any government since, that had the freedom that these people had. They had no one over them to dictate what they had to do, no one who could oppress them, no secret strategy to deprive them of their earnings so long as they obeyed the laws of God. The only thing that they had to do was to honor God. Otherwise they were responsible to no one else, nor was any one else respon-

sible to them unless one or the other of the parties made themselves responsible to the other and at worst, this could only be for a limited time.

However, and this is where we need to take lessons from them, they ultimately decided they did not want to be that responsible for themselves. Though God provided for their defense, their daily physical needs through their crops and animals, and their spiritual needs, they wanted a man to take their responsibility from them and assume it for them. They had to have a king. They were warned that their children would be taken by the king to be his servants, both military and civilian, their land would be taken by the king for his own purposes, and he would tax them heavily. Yet, they were willing to give up freedom plus all this in order to have someone else assume much of their own responsibility.

Though we live in the freest nation on earth now, all of the above happens to us daily, all the more so as we yield our responsibility to “government” and then we wonder why we are losing our freedom. The saying, “we either rule ourselves, or we will be ruled by others” has never be any more true than it is today. As those Israelites of old willingly gave up the greatest freedom man has ever known, we are following in their footsteps just as fast as we can, but can’t seem to understand why. I started to list ways that we give up our freedom, but realized that I could fill several pages, so I ask each reader to examine his or her own life to see just what responsibility we are passing on to someone else, whether it be our different levels of government, our schools, our work places, even our recreation places, or our churches. In most instances, those involved are likewise trying to pass these responsibilities on to someone else, so the situation just continues to worsen. We really do not have the right to cry because our freedom is being taken away unless we begin to govern ourselves in all aspects of our life.

JRL