

Chapter 17

YE HAVE BEEN CALLED UNTO LIBERTY

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. (Galatians 5:13-15)

Liberty is a condition which few people in the history of the world have truly known for any extended period of time. This is true both politically and religiously. The founding fathers of the United States of America wrote a preamble to the Constitution which promised *liberty and justice for all*. During the two hundred twenty-nine year history of America, her citizens have probably known more liberty than the citizens of any other nation in history.

America celebrated her bi-centennial in nineteen seventy-six. We have now entered the fifth year of the twenty-first century, and time is revealing an erosion of American liberty. This erosion gained impetus during the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt. President Roosevelt sought to increase the number of supreme court justices. When that failed, he sought to systematically fill the court with justices of a particular persuasion. For many years now, many of the justices

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of the court have applied a political agenda (*the greater good*) to the interpretation of the Constitution, rather than interpreting according to the Constitution's historical context and the plain language with which it was written (see *The Tempting of America* by Judge Bork).

When it comes to liberty, world history is little different than church history. There is always someone with seemingly good intentions ready to restrict the liberties of others. C.S. Lewis wrote: *Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end, for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.* Mr. Lewis had it right, because these protectionists' ideas have found their way into many federal, state and local laws, as well as into the constitutions and by-laws of many churches, thus stripping away liberty for *the greater good*.

In the course of our studies we have seen Paul admonish the Galatians to: *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage* (Galatians 5:1). Even so we have seen the Galatians drawn to the demand for ritual and law for salvation, through the *other gospel* of the Judaizers, despite the bondage it imposed. The conditions that came into existence in the churches of Galatia have a parallel in the political history of America. Every time there is a particularly heinous crime committed, the American public calls for more and more laws to protect itself from criminals who have no regard for existing law, let alone new ones. Thus the public, which seeks protection, loses its liberty and the crimes are not abated.

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A Constitution which provided protection against *illegal search and seizure* and one which supplied the right *to hold and bear arms* was dear to our forefathers, newly come from Europe with its many oppressive governments. At some point, perhaps due to apathy, certain precepts of our Constitution have become less precious than they should be. For example, in the so-called *war on drugs*, *reasonable cause* has allowed private property to be searched and material seized without a warrant. Allegedly, this is *for the greater good*. Thus for the good of *the war on drugs*, the Constitutional protection against illegal search and seizure has been subjected to the ability to prosecute in drug cases (a *greater good*).

Similar pressures are being brought to bear upon the right *to hold and bear arms*. Gun control advocates call the right to bear arms unnecessary, and they insist that it is archaic and barbaric. Yet in the wars of the twentieth century alone, privately held arms were effectively used in the struggle for freedom, and they were certainly used in the Revolutionary War. Nevertheless we can expect that this right will one day be lost to the hysteria of yet another school-yard shooting, despite the fact that in the recent shootings in Oregon and Colorado, numerous existing laws were violated in each school-yard incident, but these laws did not prevent the crimes. The enactment of laws has never prevented a crime where the self-interest of the one who commits the crime is greater than the perceived consequences of the crime.

We have also seen that the American government, which has imposed laws to purportedly *save lives*, has caused the murderous loss of life with little or no public reaction. The travesty at Waco should cry long and loud that liberties in the political world are but a fleeting vapor from the last breath uttered by a politician. No matter what you may have thought of David Karesh and

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the Branch Davidians, they were American citizens with, purportedly, the same Constitutional rights *of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*, religious liberty, and the right *to hold and bear arms* that all citizens of the United States are supposed to possess. Even so the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, & Firearms and the Federal Bureau of Investigation gassed and incinerated them, Constitutional rights notwithstanding, for the alleged purpose of *saving the children*, who were not saved, but perished as violently and brutally as the adults who died within the Davidian compound.

According to television reports, this action took place with the apparent approval of Attorney General Janet Reno, the State Department and, presumably, the President of the United States, each of whom is sworn to uphold the Constitution. Further an investigation of themselves by themselves of misconduct in the Waco incident has concluded that there was no wrongdoing by the government against David Karesh and the Branch Davidians. This sounds so much like our government's attitude in times past with Indian massacres and broken treaties.

There is a parallel between the Scriptures and the Constitution of the United States of America. Both promise certain fundamental rights to those who are governed by them, but those rights can be taken away by the very documents which promise them, when such documents are subjected to the interpretations of those who have a political, or religious agenda whose end justifies the means.

For example, a portion of the first amendment of the Constitution states, *Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or the free exercise thereof*. In the hands of those with a political agenda, this has become a statement of the separation of church and state,

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even though no such statement of separation is found in the context of the first amendment and is assumed from Jefferson's papers. It is noteworthy to recognize that Jefferson was but one voice in the writing of the Constitution, and it cannot be properly implied or assumed that his view in this matter was the view of the Continental Congress, which, we must assume, is expressed in the Constitution, individual's views notwithstanding.

It is interesting, Jefferson is not given the same authority in the matter of slavery that he is given in the matter of the separation of church and state. If he were, I doubt we would have the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution. Even so the liberties that are promised by the normal and common meaning of the words of the first amendment are nullified by this amendment in the hands of those who handle it deceitfully. This, too, becomes the results of those *who handle the Word of God deceitfully*: context and the attributes of God, along with the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ are ignored for an agenda. Thus Paul admonished Timothy: *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (II Timothy 2:15).

The Scriptures declare there will be a loss of liberty, both politically and religiously, before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth. No one will be truly free during the reign of the antichrist. The various peoples of this world will be enslaved to the lie of the Devil and will not be able to buy or sell without bowing before the antichrist in worship and receiving his mark in order to preserve their lives; even though our Lord said, *he who seeks to save his life will lose it*.

Thus the present emphasis from Washington and from around the world for a one world society is but a precursor of things to come. The man of sin (the antichrist) will come to this earth

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immediately after the rapture of the church, and he will, for the seven years of his reign, have absolute control over the world politically, militarily, religiously and economically.

In the eight chapter of the gospel of John the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus who, according to their testimony, was *taken in adultery, in the very act*. They tried to tempt Him, that they might find fault with Him, when they said, *Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?* Then Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground.

We can only assume what He wrote, because the Scriptures do not give us the details; but, given the circumstances, He probably wrote, *Where is the man?* The law required that both parties involved in the adultery should be stoned and, according to their testimony, they caught her in the very act. If they were able to catch her, they should have been able to catch him. This is an example of their partiality and does not reflect proper judgment. Our Lord said to them, *He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her*. One by one they left, beginning from the eldest unto the youngest. Then, our Lord said:

... Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. (John 8:10b-11)

It is interesting to note that this account of the woman taken in adultery was removed from some ancient manuscripts of the Scriptures. Augustine, one of the early church fathers, declared that it was stricken from many copies of the sacred story because of a prudish fear that it might teach immorality! (See Scofield's note 1, page 1125, Scofield Reference Bible.) This is evidence of the rapid dispersal of the leaven of the woman who hid leaven in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened

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with *a way which seemeth right unto a man.*

It is evident that man's counterfeit sense of righteousness has been at war with the truth of grace and faith from the beginning, and the *liberty* unto which the church was admonished to *Stand fast therefore in* was subjected to the self-righteous whims of religious men through the *other gospel* of the Judaizers. This apparent willingness to allow this perversion of the truth tells us there must have been many false prophets in the early churches, who attempted to subject the saving grace of Jesus Christ to the self-righteousness of man. This is the testimony of a large portion of the New Testament Scriptures:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of [the] truth, and the spirit of [the] error. (I John 4:1-6)

Our Lord began speaking to the temple crowd after His encounter with the scribes and the Pharisees over the woman taken in adultery. He stated unto them that He was the light of the world and He stated, ... *he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life*, but the Jews rejected His testimony. Then, in so many words, hidden to their understanding, He presented to them the fact that He was the Messiah when He said:

... ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. They

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understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth [the] sin is the servant of [the] sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the son abideth ever. (John 8:24-35, emphasis mine)

The position of the scribes and the Pharisees was a very naive position considering their history. Our Lord told them, *Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*, but they responded, *We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?* Despite their claim, they were anything but free. At that point in time they were in bondage to the Roman government and were certainly in bondage to the law. Throughout their history they had been in bondage to the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Greeks. For them to say they *were never in bondage to any man* was a complete misstatement of the facts.

Then our Lord answered them, *Whosoever committeth [the] sin is the servant of [the] sin.* In this regard, the Scriptures teach us that all of the world is enslaved to *[the] sin*; and we, as believers in Jesus Christ, were enslaved to *[the] sin* until the time of our salvation. It was then that we were freed from *the sin* and became enslaved to *the righteousness*, which makes believers bond servants of Jesus Christ.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of [the] sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from [the] sin, ye

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became the servants of [the] righteousness. (Romans 6:16-18)

The bondage of those Jews to whom our Lord spoke is the bondage of the whole world. Mankind is steeped in *a way which seemeth right unto a man*. Thus our Lord's answer to them, when they said, *We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man*, speaks of a condition that goes beyond mankind's normal bondage to *the sin*. This is seen by the use of the Greek word *poieo*, rendered *committeth* by the translators. *Poieo* also can be used to denote something that is taken to be one's own, like a bride, or a child in adoption. Thus a free translation of our Lord's answer is, *He who takes the sin to be his own is the slave of the sin*. This is the difference between the position of those who simply think according to *a way which seemeth right unto a man* and those who have rejected the grace of God and have accepted *a way which seemeth right unto a man* as the source of eternal life. This was the condition of those Jews, because our Lord said to them:

If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh [the] lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. (John 8:42-45, emphasis mine)

Thus there is a grave danger in the *other gospel* of the Judaizers. If their gospel is trusted in lieu of the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ, the one who puts his trust in their gospel has committed the unpardonable sin and has become a child of the Devil. This is represented by the tares in the parable of the tares and the wheat. A true believer in Jesus Christ cannot commit this sin; yet this sin can have grave consequences in the church. If it is not kept out of the church,

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it can persuade those who, by their natural minds already think according to *a way which seemeth right unto a man*, not to trust the gospel, but to trust the *other gospel* as a source of life.

Consequently Paul indicated to the Galatians that they had been called unto liberty, so they were to stand fast in that liberty, understanding that the only proper motivation for service in the body of Christ is the love of Christ. He told them:

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. (Galatians 5:14-15)

If we consider this text in the light of its context, Paul was not, and could not have been, enjoining the Galatians to keep the last six commandments of the ten commandments, called the *royal law*. Rather he used the law to refute the behavior of the Judaizers and some of the Galatians. If you are biting and devouring one another with your self-righteous judgments of accusing others and excusing yourselves, how can you possibly be fulfilling the law to love your neighbor as yourself, which you insist is necessary for salvation?

Thus he said, *all of the law is fulfilled in one word, even this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. This was fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf. Consequently the love that we are to love one another with is the love that God manifested to us in His Son. It is the love of Christ: *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins*. It is this same love that Paul spoke of to the Galatians, when he said, *by love serve one another*. Thus the love of God reciprocates in us through thanksgiving, which is the motivation for all that we do by faith. This truth is at the foundation of the life of the believer, which we will consider in our next chapter, *Walk in the Spirit*.