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### **OUR RIGHTS AS INDIVIDUALS**

Dear Friends,

*[As I write this letter, the Supreme Court of the United States is in session concerning whether or not to pass laws that would, in essence, make homosexual marriages more legal than ever before. This letter may go to print prior to the Court's final decision.]*

Many people today are talking about the rights they have as individuals and that their rights need to be legally protected. I have heard and read of Christians who are defending the rights of people to live as they choose, marry whom they choose and do as they choose, even if those Christians do not agree with the choices being made. Some Christians have expressed their position in a way similar to this, "I know you have the right to have an abortion, live in homosexuality and so on, but some day you will answer to God for your choices."

As I was thinking about these issues, the Lord said something to me and opened my eyes to the concept of "rights" in a way I had never before considered, neither have I ever heard anyone else address this subject in a similar manner. I have no doubt it will tend to stir up and elicit some very strong emotions from those who compromise. Here is the question the Lord asked me: "Who guarantees those 'rights' to abortion, homosexuality, homosexual marriage, etc? Is it the law of man, or the law of God?" Now I'll share what He explained to me about the rights of individuals.

You see, there is a HUGE difference between "free will" (which was originally given to humanity by God) and "rights." The term "rights" implies an empowerment to do a thing. Therefore, who empowers man to do that which is in opposition to God's standards? It is man, not God.

Free will is **NOT** an empowerment to do that which is opposed to God. Rather, it is the ability to make a choice. If God had empowered Adam with rights similar to those the proponents of sin claim to have, then there would have been NO consequence for Adam when he ate the forbidden fruit. The very fact that there were consequences reveals that Adam did not have the right to eat of that fruit.

God's standards have NEVER changed. But man, out of his free will, decides that his free will is the subsequent empowerment to establish rights to do as he pleases, especially if he can obtain approval from the masses and prevailing legal system. But such a process is not establishing rights, it is simply rebellion against God.

"Rights" are those things which can be performed without fear of consequential reprimand or judicial process. No human has the right to perform abortions, live in homosexuality or be married in a homosexual relationship; but every human has the free will to make such decisions. Humanity has assumed to itself rights that are nothing more

than defending the desire to fulfill the lust of the flesh, no matter what that means to each individual. Such rights, though legally defended by a society, are nothing more than that society's collective agreement to use free will in absolute rebellion to God.

In the most literal sense, the only empowered rights we truly have are those established by God which can be summed up in this manner:

*"...Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16)*

The sin nature of man has no concept at all of God's righteousness and holiness. The sin nature of man is dead to the nature and character of God. This is why man has unknowingly done the same thing that God did: establish laws to govern the actions of sin-natured people. These man-made legal systems now tell people it is wrong to steal, kill, rape, and so on. But the only law that existed when God created man was this: Do not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It wasn't until around 2,000 years after Adam sinned that God gave laws to man: the Ten Commandments and the ordinances of the "Law of Moses."

When Adam sinned, the fallen, sin nature was passed on to each subsequent generation of people. Over time, men began making laws for self-governance based on what man wanted to do and experience. If people wanted to live and not die, they made laws which said murder is illegal. If people didn't want to associate with those of other skin colors, they made laws that excluded the people from whom they wanted to disassociate. If people did not want certain religious practices to take place in their culture, they outlawed those practices.

In many cases enforcement of laws was selective, based upon the personal feelings of those entrusted to oversee a constituency. This led to people ignoring laws to do what they want. In the United States, such people often claim they have a constitutional right to their chosen actions.

As time has gone on, each generation has "pushed the envelope" of what is and is not legal and considered a "right" in society. The members of those generations get older and are eventually elected into political power. Using their legislative authority, they establish laws which protect people who want to expand upon the depths to which they sink in their sin nature.

The more a society strays from believing there is a Holy, Righteous God who has the final say in all matters and before Whom all will one day stand in final judgment, the further that society will descend into apostasy. Ironically, such a society will establish "rights" which are not truly rights at all, and then impose judicial process on any who violate those "pseudo-rights" as they are exercised by people who are increasingly lawless.

This, in itself, brings up an interesting question: what is lawlessness? In the most absolute and true sense of the term, lawlessness is when people choose to live in a way that God has forbidden or condemned. A society that realizes this will never need lawyers and courts to argue and debate over what individual citizens are allowed to do. Such a society will simply use the strength of its court system and law enforcement departments to ensure compliance to God's standards.

In Genesis chapter one, God created man in His own image and likeness. Man was to live that way forever. But again, in exercising free will and not his rights, man rebelled against the One, Holy Righteous God with the result being both spiritual and, eventually, physical death.

Every society on earth has changed and developed over the centuries, but not one has sought to maintain the standards established and expected by God. Instead, man - out of the blindness and deadness of his sin nature - has written and rewritten laws to suit what he believes is the manner in which people have a "right" to live. This is why, depending on the country and its prevailing societal standards, you will find such legally-protected rights as:

- abortion
- homosexuality
- pornography
- homosexual marriage
- prostitution
- homosexual couples adopting children
- restrictions to preach the Bible as written

- and many more which could be added to this list. If the behaviors listed were truly rights, then there would be nothing in scripture about punishment for those who are active participants.

If we choose to accept the Bible as God's Holy Word, believing that God has the final say in all matters, then from His seat of authority:

- No human has the right to be involved in homosexuality
- No human has the right to perform or receive an abortion
- No human has the right to marry into a homosexual relationship
- No human has the right to restrict another from preaching what is written in the Bible
- No human has the right to consume alcoholic beverages and become intoxicated to any degree
- No human has the right to be involved in any manner with pornography
- No human has the right to worship any god but the One, True God
- No human court has the right to establish laws that oppose the standards laid out in the Bible

- and much more could be added to this list. However, God honors the free will of all people to choose such behavior.

Consider the writing of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:19-23:

***<sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, <sup>21</sup>Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.***

***<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, <sup>23</sup>meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.***

Notice what it says concerning the things listed in verses 22 and 23: Against such there is no law. Why does it say that? Because those things are **RIGHTS**; that which Christians are empowered by God to do. Believers who, through their own free will, put into action what is identified in verses 22 and 23 have no fear of consequential reprimand or judicial process from God.

What we are seeing is how compromise and apostasy in the world has impacted the Body of Christ. Christians declare that the lost have the legally-protected right to practice their sin, *and they say such things for no other reason than the laws of fallen society make the sin legal!* In making such a declaration Christians are, in fact, defending the practice of sin. There is absolutely **NO** provision for this in the Bible...none whatsoever! Christians who truly understand what is happening will instead say, "You have the free will to choose sinful behavior, but you are not empowered by God with such a right."

It is inevitable that the concept of judgment could arise in a discussion such as this. I have heard Christians say things like, "We don't have the right to judge,"..."We aren't supposed to judge others,"..."Judge not lest ye be judged." Well, this may come as a shock to many people, but I have been given the right to judge every human on earth; yes, it is my God-empowered right. Conflict over such a bold statement arises from, 1) not understanding the difference between *judgment* and *sentencing*, and 2) not clearly understanding how we as Christians are to judge.

In Matthew 7:1-6, Jesus makes it clear that the standard we use for judging is the standard that will be used against us. Then, in John 12:48, Jesus reveals that God's word is the standard for all judgment. Therefore, if I know someone is involved in adultery, and God's word says adultery is a sin, then I can rightfully judge that person guilty of sin, no matter what the laws of my society declare. What I **CANNOT** do is impart an arbitrary punitive sentence on the guilty person. Romans 2:27, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 and 1 Timothy 5:20 are all passages about Christians using the word of God to judge others.

But because so many Believers have been seduced by the world's twisted ideas and definition of rights, they fail to realize that the term "freedom of choice" actually means "society's legally protected and empowered permission to sin." They have forgotten that God's holy standards are universal for all societies, regardless of the man-made laws governing those societies. Far too many Christians have been lulled into a spiritual slumber where they are now in more agreement with societal law than they are God's holy law. They are blinded to the truth that they are more of a James 4:4 "friend of the world" than they are a disciple of Christ.

Fallen humanity can exercise all the free will it wants in order to engage in sin, depravity, debauchery and rebellion unto God, all the while calling such behavior "rights." But there are no true rights other than what God has established in His word. Likewise, the courts of man can judicially declare anything they want to be legal. But God, in His word, has already judged what is and is not acceptable behavior.

We are so very close to the return of Jesus. It is my hope and prayer that Christians reading this letter will understand that with God, there is no compromise. His word stands apart from the will of man and all the world's legal systems. He will never violate the free will of man; but that should not be interpreted as His acquiescence to sinful

behavior. God is holy, and all Christians are to live holy. His word is to be the standard for all our beliefs and social platforms. We are to be the pure, spotless bride He is returning to receive.

Christians who take an uncompromising stand for the holy living God has revealed in His word are going to take criticism and even persecution. Not only will this come from the lost and fallen world, but it will also come from fellow Christians who have seared their conscience, are blinded by Satan's lies and who want to justify their own sin and rebellion to God.

But I want to encourage you: Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. By His never-ending love for us, He will see us through to the end if we continue to seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God. The price we pay for such an unyielding stand will be well worth it on the day we hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the eternal joy of the Lord!"

May His glorious presence fill your life,

*Jim*

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