

RIGHTS

Text: John 19:10-11

INTRO: Why did God allow evil men like the Herods & the Caesars to rise to power in times past? Why does He allow men like Momar Kadaphe, Fidel Castro, etc., to exercise power today. I don't know. I won't try to second guess Him. I only know that they rule because He allows them to do so.

We hear much about rights today: human rights, civil rights, property rights, states rights, women's rights, minority rights, animal rights, etc. About the only rights we hear relatively little about in our modern society is God's right to command His creation & to bring it into judgment. For the next few minutes, think with me on the subject of rights.

I. GOD AS CREATOR HAS THE ONLY ABSOLUTE RIGHTS.

READ ROMANS 9:20-24.

II. MAN ENJOYS CERTAIN DELEGATED RIGHTS.

A. Since God has ALL rights, the only rights others have are those that God sees fit to grant them. The framers of our constitution spoke of inalienable rights with which God has endowed us, among them, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Let's think about that for a moment.

1. Life. The fact that God has given us life indicates that we have a right to live until God deems otherwise.

2. Liberty. All have certain liberties; none have absolute liberty. Some of our forefathers owned slaves, even as they wrote the Constitution & the Bill of Rights.

a. Some parents grant their children more freedom than others. Recall Paul Bolton & Dr. Spook. The rule is still "Children obey your parents in the Lord" (Eph 6:1). Exception: in the Lord. Some parents are not doing their duty, & are

leaving their children spirituall & morally crippled for life. "Little Johnny, full of glee...

- b. Some governing authorities grant more freedom to their citizens than others. The rule is still, "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (1 Pet 2:13). Exception: Acts 5:29.

3. Pursuit of Happiness. I agree that all people have the right to chase happiness, but I have observed that those who chase it most constantly seem to seldom catch up with it, while those who do their duty, mind their own business & live in harmony with God's laws frequently enjoy happiness as a by-product of their godly lifestyle.

Solomon pursued happiness, sought to find meaning in life, in worldly knowledge, earthly possessions, personal achievements, wine, women & song--but he finally concluded: "Fear God & keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Eccl 12:13-14).

B. The Jews had certain rights given them under the Law of Moses, in matters of land ownership, inheritance, protection from the unlawful, etc.

C. Christians have certain rights granted to them because of their obedience & faithfulness to Christ.

1. Those who believe the gospel & receive Christ as revealed therein, have the RIGHT to become children of God in a special sense, John 1:12.
2. Those who work "full time" in preaching & teaching God's word have the RIGHT to be supported financially by those who learn from them,

2 Cor. 9:3-14.

3. All Christians have been granted the RIGHT to an altar that Jewish priests, even the High Priest, had no access: the benefit of the sacrificial death of Jesus.

We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. (Heb 13:10).

NOTE: Of course, many of the Jewish priests did gain the right to that altar, but only by becoming obedient to the gospel of Jesus Christ, Acts 6:7.

4. But of all the blessings, rights, & privileges that we may be partakers in the here & now, the ultimate privilege, the ultimate blessing, the ultimate right is reserved for us in heaven: "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, & may enter through the gates into the city."
(Revelation 22:14).

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, February 2, 1997
Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, August 29, 1999