

Declaration of Independence: Our Rights Come From God

There is a Creator God and He determines right and wrong, good and evil... not man. This is the most important foundational principle of law and justice. If this principle is not understood as absolute, undeniable truth, one could conclude that every principle in our founding charter, *The Declaration of Independence* is a lie. If there is any shadow of a doubt about the fact that the God of the Bible is our Creator and He alone, totally independent of the will of man, determines right and wrong, good and evil; then I would ask that you review the first two lectures. Until you thoroughly understand this concept and are in full agreement with this fact; then and only then, will the rest of this lecture series make any sense.

Video of the sermon

While every word in our Founding Charter is important perhaps the second most important principle of freedom to understand is that *Our Rights come from God – Not Government, therefore they are not subject to the Repeal or Restrictions of Human Laws*. The Declaration of Independence states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." If the proper role of government is to secure our unalienable rights, it is essential that we have an accurate understanding of that term at the time it was written.

Alienable according to Webster's 1828 Dictionary means, "That

may be... transferred to another..."[1] Therefore if the American Founders wanted to indicate that their rights could have been transferred to their elected representatives to be regulated and controlled, they would have used that term. However, they chose to describe our rights as unalienable, that which cannot be transferred to another. John Adams, a member of the committee that drafted the Declaration, made this understanding indisputable when he explained, "I say RIGHTS, for such they have, undoubtedly, antecedent to all earthly government, – Rights, that cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws – Rights, derived from the great Legislator of the universe." [2] Note that Adams said, "...rights that **cannot** be repealed or restrained by human laws..."

The Virginia Constitution, a document with which Thomas Jefferson the chief author of the Declaration had intimate knowledge, reinforces this understanding when it states in ARTICLE 1 and Section 1, "A DECLARATION OF RIGHTS made by the good people of Virginia in the exercise of their sovereign powers, [3] which rights do pertain to them and their posterity, as the basis and foundation of government. That all men are by nature equally free and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety." [4] That is "all men... have... rights... they cannot, by any [agreement be] deprived [of]..." Again notice the phrase that our rights, "**cannot, by any compact, [be] deprive[d] or divest[ed]...**"

The Virginia Constitution removes all doubt that the rights we have in a state of nature are what the Declaration of Independence calls unalienable rights and further clarifies them by stating that these rights belong to everyone and their descendants. That is to say that everyone on the earth has what our Declaration of Independence calls unalienable rights,

whether one is an American or not, because our rights come from our Creator, not government. All people all over the world are born with unalienable rights and no one has a right to take them away or regulate or control them. However this does not mean that all governments equally protect these God-given rights or even recognize them.

Absolute Rights

At this point some may ask: "Why is it so important that we understand that we have rights that cannot be restrained or repealed by man-made laws?" After all as the modern pragmatists claim, "Shouldn't we be reasonable and understand that for the good of the whole we should expect that our government officials must be able to place certain reasonable restrictions on our rights by requiring a qualifying license or permit or completely denying them by law?" While today many seem to feel this way, let me see if I can explain why our Founders were very much opposed to this idea. At the heart of their reasoning were their Biblical roots.

God commands, "Hate evil, love good; Establish justice in the gate..." (Amos 5:15)[5] The gate is the seat of civil authority... like our courthouse or statehouse. Justice is doing that which is right according to the Creator. As we have stated before God commanded, "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13) therefore we have a right to life. God said, "You shall not steal" (Exodus 20:15) and "You shall not covet" (Exodus 20:17) therefore we have a right to property. Then He directed that you shall not man steal or kidnap therefore we have a right to liberty (Exodus 21:16). Our unalienable rights come from the negative law of the Ten Commandments and they cannot be alienated because they are part of the unchanging character of God (Malachi 3:6a). (Not only do we have an obligation not to violate the rights of our fellow man, we have a responsibility to protect them as was pointed out last week.

Who are we to claim that the word of the Creator of the

universe is not valid and that we have the right to rule in His place? We will either be ruled by the Bible or by the will of the strong. We will stand up for Biblical justice or we will be ruled by the arbitrary will of our fellow man. Just because we delegated our God-given authority to fulfill our obligations to our representatives in government that in no way relieves us of our obligations. They are our civil servants and if they are acting outside of our authority it is up to us to rein them in; God will hold us accountable. The Virginia Constitution states the people are the sovereigns and have the ultimate responsibility to ensure our civil servants don't exceed the legitimate authority we have delegated them.

RIGHTS

Many within the modern church teach that we should be willing to give up our rights for the common good, but this is not what the Bible teaches. Psalm 82:3,4 proclaims, "Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." How can the Christian establish justice in government, if they refuse to get involved in the political process?

Referring to rulers, Proverbs 31:5 states, "lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights." Proverbs 31:8-9 further states, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." If government is our collective rightful use of force to protect our life, liberty and property, why do we let government act contrary to these goals? Why do Christians allow this to occur?"

Isaiah 10:1-4 NIV, "Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless."

Jeremiah 5:26-29 "Among my people are wicked men who lie in wait like men who snare birds and like those who set traps to catch men. Like cages full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; they have become rich and powerful and have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor. Should I not punish them for this?" declares the LORD. "Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?" If "We the People" are the sovereigns as the Virginia Constitution claims, aren't we ultimately responsible for what we allow our civil servants to do?

Lamentations 3:34-36 states, "To crush underfoot all prisoners in the land, to deny a man his rights before the Most High, to deprive a man of justice— would not the Lord see such things?" Does God give us the option to not get involved in the political arena when we see our so-called civil servants using the force of law to desecrate the rights of others? Doesn't a man have a right to the fruit of his labor? Isn't it theft to use force to take from a man what he has earned and give it to someone else? Isn't it a violation of the law of liberty to interfere with the actions of others until they have in some way violated the equal rights of others?

Does not Godly love require us to look out for the rights of others? In the New Testament, we find Jesus consumed with zeal for his Father's house and showing love and compassion for those being robbed as he drove the culprits away. In the Book of Matthew chapter 21:12,13, "Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" Are our local, state, and federal officials little more than "a den of thieves" depriving those who earned from enjoying the fruits of their labor and redistributing their wealth to ensure their own

reelection? Where is the indignation of the average Christian in regards to the so-called legalized plunder in government?

Jesus broke the existing civil code when He drove out the legal robbers. Read the account. The Jewish leaders were upset because the moneychangers were sanctioned by the temple authorities and asked by what authority Jesus drove out the swindlers. Therefore, you can have complete confidence that the idea of God-ordained rights is very much in line with Biblical teaching. Every citizen has a right to the produce of their own labor. They have a right not to be interfered with until they have violated the rights of others or God's moral law. This was validated when God wrote in stone, "You shall not steal." (Exodus 20:15) On the other hand the only rights you may have according to the secularist, progressive, or statist, are what is granted by the state. The statist philosophy of all power or authority originating in the state would make Christ out to be a sinner. It is time for the Christians to stand in the gate, the seat of civil authority, and promote Godly justice. The Word of the Lord in Isaiah 1:17 states, "...Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor, Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow."

THE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

Though not immediately apparent to most people, the principle of "Unalienable Rights" is arguably the second most important concept of freedom that sets America apart from all other nations on the face of the earth. This precept of unalienable rights is so unique and precious to freedom-loving citizens everywhere that if rightly understood and applied, it prevents those in government from infringing on the individual's right to control their own life, liberty, and property. This is why so many from around the world have flocked to our shores, to obtain as Simeon Howard so aptly resounded in last weeks lecture, "... liberty to pursue his own happiness."

As history has proven, the free enterprise system, based on

the principle of unalienable rights as practiced in early American history, is the most productive supplier of human needs and economic justice mankind has ever known. This God ordained economic system of men keeping the fruits of their labor and controlling their life and property has produced the greatest economic prosperity for the greatest number of people.

The free enterprise system is based on blessing your fellow man and only rewards you based on how much you have blessed others. For example, let's say you sell a cup of coffee to someone and you make a little money. The coffee you sold obviously blessed the customer more than the money you charged or they would not have made the trade. If you sell 5 cups of coffee you make a little more. If you sell 500 cups of coffee you make more still. If you sell 50,000 cups of coffee you make a good deal more. The more you sell the more people you bless and the more you are blessed. Why should anybody be upset if you are blessing others and why shouldn't you be blessed based on how much you bless others? This is the free enterprise system in action. The free enterprise system only requires a willingness for people to work, an idea that will help others, the ability to put this idea into action, and the freedom to do so. The type of freedom needed for the free enterprise system to work is the freedom guaranteed by government as envisioned by our Founders.

This principle of government to protect the right of the individual to participate in the free enterprise system was summed up in what our Founders called a republican form of government. Therefore when Jefferson proclaimed, "The true foundation of republican government is the equal right of every citizen in his person and property, and in their management,"[6] the statist or mercantile old world and the modern politician must have thought he was crazy.

This statist or so-called progressive concept, "that it takes a village" is a failed system that has never worked because it

is based on theft. The only people whom statism really works for are the ones in charge, because they live off the so-called legalized plunder of others. Under this system there is simply no incentive to work because a great deal of everything you produce is taken from you and given to others. Few people choose to work unless there is some motivation, a material incentive outside of the work itself. The desire for material reward is by far the most powerful and sustaining reason for work. In spite of our best efforts through the free enterprise system most of us will never accumulate vast wealth, nevertheless the free enterprise system, based on the philosophy of unalienable rights, is the most honest and just system mankind has ever experienced. This free enterprise system also makes it possible for some of us to enjoy the true luxuries of life and experience prosperity previously unknown to the common man. More important than that, however, it enables all the rest of us to raise our standard of living far in excess of what is possible under any other system and it is the reason why in less than 160 years America sprang up from a hostile wilderness to become the envy of the statist old world.

THE CHOICE IS OURS.

Will we work to restore our Republic to secure our unalienable rights or will we allow ourselves to degenerate into a democracy where the ever-changing will of the majority rules; where the majority constantly votes for the politician that will give them the most out of the public treasury; where the needs of the many are funded by the ability and hard work of the few. God has always called this theft. It becomes a never-ending cycle of tax and spend until all is owned and controlled by those in government, leading to totalitarianism. Government regulation is the statist pathway to totalitarian control. It destroys freedom and brings about economic chaos, oppression, and it destroys prosperity.

Let us not acquiesce to necessity being the plea for every

infringement of human liberty – that appears to be the slogan of most politicians today. Many are sick and tired of hearing from the modern political pundits that the idea of “Unalienable Rights” is impractical in our modern society. This was the creed of the statist old world that our Forefathers rejected so many years ago. The free enterprise system based on the principle of unalienable rights works. As James Madison proclaimed, “Government is instituted to protect property of every sort... This being the end of government, that alone is not a just government... nor is property secure under it, where the property which a man has in his personal safety and personal liberty is violated by arbitrary seizure of one class of citizens for the service of the rest.”[7] If those who work are allowed to keep the fruit of their labor and dispense the surplus as they see fit, then they will work harder and longer. They will invest, they will invent, and they will produce more than you have ever dreamed possible. And there will be more for everyone including those that must live off the generosity of others.

The choice before us is clear. We, as individuals and churches, will either defend the American principle of *Our Rights come from God – Not Government, Therefore they are not subject to the Repeal or Restrictions of Human Laws*, or our current government-regulated and controlled economic system will finally destroy the economy of the most prosperous nation the world has ever known.

Footnotes:

[1] Noah Webster, *American Dictionary Of The English Language; Noah Webster 1828*, (Facsimile Edition) (California, Foundation For American Christian Education, 2002)

[2] Arthur Palumbo, *The Authentic Constitution An Originalist View of America's Legacy*, (New York, Algora Publishing, 2009) p. 15.

[3] Underlining the authors.

[4] Virginia's Legislative Information System, Constitution of Virginia, <http://constitution.legis.virginia.gov/>

[5] All biblical quotes from The New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

[6] Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson Writings Autobiography Notes on the State of Virginia Public and Private Papers Addresses Letters*, (New York, The Library of America, 1984), p. 1398.

[7] James Madison, *The Founders' Constitution*, Edited by Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner. (Indianapolis ID, Liberty Fund, 2000), Vol. 1 p. 598.

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