

TRUE LIBERTY

The eternal price of freedom

If a man decides he wants to live his life separate from God, it means that he goes about his life without thinking about or recognizing God. He may still continue to experience the blessing of God's presence in the world around him indirectly, but this is also left unrecognized and disbelieved. Should that man continue to his grave with such a desire, God grant's him his wish and the man's eternal soul is sent to the one place in all places where God's presence is not felt: Hell.

Then Jesus said to those Judeans who had believed him, "If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They replied, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been anyone's slaves! How can you say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "I tell you the solemn truth, everyone who practices sin is a slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the family forever, but the son does remain forever. So if the son sets you free, you will be really free."

— JOHN 8.31-35

While individuals and governments differ in responsibility, they share the same path to freedom. When you hear someone use the phrase "separation of church and state" understand two things: the first, that such a phrase is not used (or intended) in the language of the US *Constitution* or *Bill of Rights*, and the second, that what they really mean is "separation of God and government."

Just as the separation of man from God is inadvisable, so too is the separation of God from government. A government that gives neither thought nor recognition of God is a government that cannot recognize God-given rights and that is not accountable to anyone higher than itself.

Throughout history the majority of people have been permitted to live lives separated from God. Likewise the majority of governments have not recognized subservience to God. All such governments eventually devolve into oppressive states from which the people have cried for freedom. In fact, in all of history only two nations – Israel and the United States – have ever attempted to integrate God and government in the right relationship.

Historically, when people cry out *against* oppression they cry out *to* God. For example, the Old Testament records that God rescued the people of Israel from oppressive enemies both foreign¹ and domestic². The reverse is also true; God was just as willing to let the people become oppressed by their leadership or foreign nations when the people chose to separate themselves from Him. It cannot be said that God is oppressive, for he permits people to live as they choose and be blessed by, or suffer the consequences of, their choice.

If a man wants freedom he must *connect* with God. In the passage quoted at the left, Jesus' audience was as incredulous about his claim as any American would be. "We are children of Abraham" has the same implication as, "We are Americans." The question is the same for either citizen, *how can I be more free than I am already?* Jesus' response shows that he understands the human condition better than people of privilege. He points out that we are all slaves to sin. Freedom is found in God alone and since sin separates us from God we are not truly free. Only when we connect to God, like a son to a father, can true freedom be realized.

May everyone understand this truth before it is too late: whether a person or a nation, to experience true freedom means being connected to – not separated from – God.

1. Foreign powers: Egypt, Medo-Persia and Rome.

2. Domestic kings: Saul, Abijah, Athaliah, Ahaz, and Amon.