

The Gift of “Governments”

1 Corinthians 12:28, KJV

Why do I have to be like the little boy blurting out the emperor's nakedness which seems so obvious to me, in a crowd of grownups perfectly satisfied that the emperor's clothes cover him just fine, who are equally satisfied that children should be seen and not heard?

Among those few Christians who have even heard of the Holy Spirit Gift which the KJV translates “governments” in 1 Corinthians 12:28, I find a pretty unanimous opinion that my interpretation of it is wrong.

I think it means a willingness to arrange “intercessions” [Gr: “interviews”] with political leaders, as 1 Timothy 2:1 says we should do.

The 100% consensus of my commentaries and translations is that it means a “church administrator”, in no way suggesting interaction with any level of authority outside the church.

I have searched for some explanation of why we should believe it means only a church administrator, in view of five facts:

1. a “church administrator” is never mentioned in the Bible, unless it would be Judas, who managed the money, John 13:29; while the Bible is full of heroes whose political importance was huge. (See the article, “God's Political Heroes”.)

2. the Greek word is κυβερνησεις/kubernayseis, from which our “gubernatorial” comes, meaning the office of state governor. There is nothing about the word to indicate it can mean authority only within a church, and not also political authority.

3. the Greek word means helmsman/captain of a ship. Not a common sailor, but the captain. This distinction in the Strong's lexicon is illustrated by Rev 18:17 and Acts 27:11. Therefore if it means an office in the church, it is not a mere church administrator as we know them today, with jurisdiction only over finances and janitors, but the pastor. But this begs the question, if the Gift of “governments” describes the pastor, what do the other Gifts describe which are generally associated with pastors? And how shall we handle the news that pastoring “is ranked by the Spirit with the lower functions” in 1 Corinthians 12:28? (“Commentary...” by Jameison, Fausset, and Brown.) Pastors would, then, rank next to last. (“Tongues” is last.)

4. The clearest, simplest, most obvious meaning of “governments”, as the Albert Barnes Commentary of the New Testament (1868) points out, is involvement with “governments”. Barnes admits the word “usually applied to the government or steering of a ship....simple idea, however, is that of ruling, or exercising government....All that is clear is, that there were those who administered government...” What is it about this most obvious meaning that makes Barnes and others

so determined to swim against its current that they would rather embrace theologically dubious conclusions like the Gift has disappeared along with apostles, miracles, healings and helps? Are people today in that much less need of being governed? Here is his history of the uncertainty over the word among commentators:

Doddridge, in accordance with Amyraut, supposes that distinct offices may not be here referred to, but that the same persons may be denoted in these expressions as being distinguished in various ways; that is, that the same persons were called "helpers" in reference to their skill in aiding those who were in distress, and "governments" in regard to their talent for doing business, and their ability in presiding in counsels for deliberation, and in directing the affairs of the church....Lightfoot contends, that the word which is here used and translated "governments" does not refer to the power of ruling, but to a person endued with a deep and comprehensive mind, one who is wise and prudent; and in this view Mosheim, Macknight, and Bishop Horsley coincide. Calvin refers it to the elders, to whom the exercise of discipline was entrusted. Grotius understands it of the pastors, (Eph 4:1,) or of the elders who presided over particular churches, Ro 12:8. Locke supposes that they were the same as those who had the power of discerning spirits.

Barnes' conclusions are questionable even to himself:

It is not easy to determine what particular office or function is here intended....it cannot be argued that there was to be a [permanent] order of men in the church who were to be called helps, or governments....**The simple idea, however, is that of ruling, or exercising government;** whether this refers to a permanent office, ... or whether it refers to the same persons who might also have exercised other functions, and this in addition, cannot be determined from the passage before us.

5. Romans 12:8 describes the moral duty of anyone with any kind of authority to exercise it efficiently. This reminds us that in America, voters are the ultimate authority, in practice as well as in theory. Therefore, Romans 12:8 commands Christian voters to exercise their stewardship well. If this is a Christian duty, then surely the Holy Spirit especially equips some to fulfill it. As we scan the lists of Holy Spirit Gifts, curious about confirmation of this theory by locating such a Holy Spirit provision, 1 Corinthians 12:28 jumps out at us.

You say, "But no one in Jesus' time voted. That didn't start until a few centuries ago." Not so. Leaders of "hundreds" and "thousands" under Moses were selected by the people, Deut 1:13. God protested loudly when the people insisted on exchanging their freedom for the tyranny of monarchy, 1 Samuel 8. And yet a concordance search for "hundreds" shows that Moses' system existed side by side with monarchy until the exile. If you look up "hundreds" in Black's Law Dictionary, 4th Edition, you will learn that this same system existed in England under the Saxons. It is hard to imagine that some remnant of this did not exist in Jesus' time.

But even people under tyrannies are ultimately responsible for the sins of their government, since a tyrant can only tyrannize as much as the people are willing to tolerate. Thus, the Bible describes the sins of kings as the reasons judgment was brought upon the people. Thus, Jeroboam made two golden calves: not because he was that theologically ignorant, but to satisfy the people. 1 Kings 12:28. Thus, Saul disobeyed God by taking booty, because he "obeyed" the "people", 1 Sam 15:24. Thus, the Pharisees frequently refrained from killing Jesus because they "feared the people".

Thus, in every nation from the beginning to now, God has given people of courage some opportunity to influence their governments, however costly it may have been to take advantage of it. In fact history is full of brave individuals who stood against overwhelming odds and changed the course of political as well as spiritual history. These men and women prevailed by greater than human power. Thus, history agrees with my interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:28 that the Holy Spirit equips Christians, some more than others, to exercise stewardship over this potential influence.

SEARCHING FOR THE CASE AGAINST ME

Pray for witnesses to the goodness of God's principles, where our nation decides whether to apply the principles of God or of Satan. Allow these witnesses to inform their church family specifically where and when politicians are institutionalizing the very sins against which their pastor preaches.

So then what is the evidence that κυβερνησεις/“governments” means only a “church administrator”, and that I am dead wrong about it?

I could find none in any commentary. No evidence, reasoning, etymology, history. Just the assumption, presented as if it had never occurred to anybody to question it.

I don't want to just assume I am right, especially surrounded, as I am, by consensus that I am wrong. I want to test my theories. That means I have to find something to test. Unsupported assumptions that I don't know what I am talking about may challenge my courage to continue declaring what seems clear to me in the Bible, but they don't challenge my theories. I need to find some effort to defend the assumption that κυβερναυσεις/“governments” means only a “church administrator”. Perhaps you know such a person. Please tell me who. Perhaps you are such a person. I would love to dialog with you. Meanwhile, I found one such man, who even graciously and generously responded to my emailed questions.

Conversations with a Des Moines pastor led me to Liberty University. The pastor had graduated from there. He told me that the definition of κυβερναυσεις as a church administrator is universally accepted, including even there. That amazed me, since Liberty University was founded by one of America's premier Christian activists. I would have expected a more activist-friendly interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:28 there.

Yet I found that Dr. Daniel Mitchell has taught there 22 years; he is considered the seminary's expert on the Holy Spirit Gifts; and he has this to say on page 1 of his book, “The Book of First Corinthians – Christianity in a Hostile Culture”, published by AMG:

(An error over the centuries) is to try to create the kingdom of God on earth and, with it, replace all human systems of government. Following Augustine, many have sought to obliterate the “kingdom of the world” by universally establishing the “kingdom of God” on the earth. Many modern-day theologians, postmillennialists, and amillennialists continue to follow this misguided teaching. It is misguided for two dominant reasons: First, it is not possible to establish God's kingdom without the King. A simple straightforward reading of New Testament prophetic passages such as the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24-25), 1 Corinthians 15, or Revelation 20 makes this clear. In such texts it is hardly possible to conclude anything other than that it would be only after the return of Christ to the earth that the universal messianic kingdom would or could be established.

I'm too busy reading the Bible to read up on what a “theonomist” is, but I can't even imagine what it means to “replace all human systems of government”, or to “obliterate the ‘kingdom of the world’”, or to “universally establish the ‘kingdom of God’ on the earth”. I would be horrified if someone told me they were planning to “establish” “the universal messianic kingdom”, if the fellow telling me this didn't appear to be “coming in the clouds with great power and glory”.

I will never ask anyone to refashion the governments of Earth after the political principles underlying God's future kingdom which He has not yet revealed. There are enough Biblical principles which God has already revealed to light the darkness infecting human governments today. John lit up Herod's incest like a searchlight just by holding up God's Laws next to them, and all John had was the Old Testament. Jesus exposed the Pharisees' tyranny with just the light of reason and Scripture.

All I ask is that Christians in America not only pray, but appeal to the population in general, and meet with lawmakers in particular. As Paul asked Timothy:

1 Timothy 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications [Gr. petitions, or appeals], **prayers, intercessions** [Gr: interviews], **and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority;....**

For whose benefit? For everyone's. For our benefit, “...that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”

For their benefit, that they may enjoy the blessings of salvation and the happiness of applying God's laws. At least it is God's opinion, that a legal system molded by Biblical principles makes a nation happy.

Deuteronomy 4:8 And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Proverbs 29:18 ...he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

(I am afraid that I may have to take a moment and explain why God is not stupid when He calls His laws, especially those through Moses, a foundation of happiness. There has been such miserable communication between activists and pastors for the past couple of generations that Americans have nearly lost the appreciation of how many of the basic categories of criminal and civil law on our lawbooks to this day have their precedent in

principles from both our Old and New Testaments. If you are unclear how laws about oxen are useful in a nation of autos, reflect on Matthew 9:14-17, which explains how to discern the Original Intent of a law when circumstances change. Visit another nation whose liberties lack the safeguards of our laws, and compare their happiness with ours.)

The idea that one of the two purposes of lobbying politicians is for their own benefit, up to and including salvation, is established not only by verse 4 but by the word “for” (Gr: ὑπερ) in “for all men, and for kings”. “In christological sayings ὑπερ is used to show the thrust of the work of salvation. The death and passion of Christ are for men and accrue to their favour.” (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Eerdmans)

These two goals of lobbying: the salvation of society including its lawmakers, and ending persecution of Christians, are **“good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”** 1 Timothy 2:3-4

The common interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:1 is “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, prayers, prayers, prayers, and prayers, be made for all men....”

But even if the verse did not mention appeals or interviews, but only prayers, how could that mean to pray in our closets, and never physically or verbally approach oppressive politicians, never confront them, never appeal to them? In the words of James 2:14-26, if we just state a fine goal, but take no action towards reaching it, what good is that?

HOLY SPIRIT GIFTS: ONLY FOR THE CHURCH?

Dr. Mitchell says the clearest evidence that the Gift of “governments” equips a Christian only to be a church administrator, and not also to influence literal governments through those forums where our nation decides whether to follow the ideals of God or of Satan, is that *none* of the Gifts are for anyone else’s benefit than the Church, nor are any of them to be practiced outside the Church.

Page 172 of his book: “Gifts are for the Benefit of the Body”. This is a heading, but under the heading is only one phrase of support for the thesis: “Paul strives...to show that spiritual gifts are primarily for ministry (1 Corinthians 14).”

Not until page 176 does the thread continue: “Pray for witnesses to the goodness of God’s principles, where our nation decides to apply the principles of God or of Satan. Allow these witnesses to inform their church family specifically where and when politicians are institutionalizing the very sins against which their pastor preaches. This will not only save America, but will deliver church members from the sins which government protects, by clarifying for church members how to recognize the subtle tentacles of sin slithering about our schools, our culture, our national discussion, and our laws. And by clarifying that sin remains sin, even after Government makes it legal, and it should embarrass any Christian to vote for politicians who call “evil” “good”.

‘Ministries’ are supernatural appointments for service. They speak of where the Holy Spirit does this work. ‘Activities’ are supernatural enablements for service. They suggest *how* the Holy Spirit does this work. Taken together they suggest that for each there is a specific *gift* that correlates with a specific *place* and a specific *work*.” I do not find Mitchell’s further development of this distinction, or its significance, and I do not find these words in the text.

The next sentence seems to begin another thread: “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Cor 12:7). ... (Greek, *sumphero*, to be profitable.)...Paul seems to view them as having been given for the profit and mutual benefit of the the body in this body of Christ....The primary reference to context is to the ‘local’ body – not a ‘universal’ body.”

NASB95 reports v. 7 as above. “For the common good” raises the question, how common? Are Gifts for the good only of church members? Or does the Holy Spirit expect us to use His Gifts to minister not just to each other but to the community? Other meanings of *sumphero* in lexicons are “bring together”, “bear together”, “to carry with others”, “to contribute in order to help”, [Enhanced Strong’s]; “the underlying idea is *concurrence* of circumstances” [Word Studies in the NT].

Dr. Mitchell confirmed that this is his meaning in his emails to me:

A spiritual gift is a divine enablement for edifying the Body of Christ--the Church. As such, in my view, the idea of a spiritual gift given to the community (i.e. Government) is, by definition, not a “spiritual gift.” It certainly might be a “calling,” since vocations include all areas of individual aptitude and would certainly

spill over to what is often considered “secular” venues.

...a...gift...is always given...to edify the Body of Christ. Many will challenge this by saying that edification can always relate to one or another of the gifts listed. That's OK, but I am not hung up on that. In whatever way a person “loves” another in concrete ways in the Body through the Holy Spirit, may be considered their spiritual gift to that other individual. Notice that I consider the gift to be something that the believer “gives” rather than something they “have.” But once again, it is directed to the Body, not government, or any secular agency.

I assumed, in my reply, that he could not possibly have meant that love in action is something the Holy Spirit means for us to reserve only for fellow church members! I replied,

I assume you get the purpose of gifts being to edify the church from 1 Cor 14:12. *1Co 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.* But just as love benefits the church but is even so “prophecy”, the church! The word is discomfort (my translation), 20:7 is the one specific “preaching” in church, be in synagogues, Mat 4:23; of other places....

Dr. Mitchell and the church, as the exercise of a Gift:

Yes, but proph-
the gift of prophe-
[I] still would
[gifts, but] sug-
Before I knew he

Today's American church suffers spiritual constipation. We are all the time “getting fed”, and little of the time passing it on. Thus we do not risk persecution. However, all those years of gorging, without passing anything on, have made The Body pretty sick. We are in a coma all week except for Sunday morning when we wake up to take enough nourishment to make it through the next coma.

other than a Gift depending on where it occurs, I had written,

As I look over each gift on the following list, it seems Biblical mention of their use *outside* Christian fellowships dwarfs any scant mention of their use *inside* Christian fellowships. I can't think of a single gift on these lists which was reserved exclusively for church use, according to any Biblical clue. What precedent is there then for saying the gifts of “governments” or “him that ruleth” were not meant for application outside the four church walls?

Dr. Mitchell: The context in every mention is church/body related. You have to import the idea that they are world-related. But that would not be based on careful exegesis of the text. I won't say it is wrong, but it just begs the question.

Me: ...you say “you have to import the idea that they are world-related.” I guess you mean it is “importing an idea” to mention other verses reporting the widespread operation of these Gifts outside the walls of the meeting room.

Mitchell: No, not at all. The “meeting room” is only accidentally associated with the church. The church is blood-bought people—not a building. It is an organism (not an organization).

Me: I don't understand your position on whether the identical activity as a “gift”, operating outside the meeting room walls, ought to be recognized as a “gift” or if it is “classified” as something else. When I observed that Paul did the same kind of “reasoning” outside, as inside, the meeting room walls, you said “proclaiming the gospel to the world is not the same as the gift of prophecy that was given to the church.” Which sounds as if the identical activity is no longer a “gift” once it is done off premises.

Mitchell: I don't suggest that the gifts do not have any impact outside the body. But it is not “for that purpose.” Indeed, when a gifted evangelist preaches the Gospel, there are “added to the church” such as should be saved. When a person has the gift of mercy, it is not likely it will be limited only to those “inside” but will be a testimony to all who see and receive from it. But it will be the body that will be built up. My point is that the gifts are given to the body members for the edification of the body and it is to that end they are used—not

not meant to be reserved only for the church (!), subject of this chapter, was never confined to fined in v. 3 as to equip (KJV “edify”), correct, and and is used today as a synonym for “preach”. Acts time I can remember the Bible describing someone yond the general statement that Jesus “preached” the rest of the time, preaching was done all manner

swered that even the very same activity, outside cise of a Gift inside the church, would not be the

claiming the gospel to the world is not the same as cy that was given to the church. But even if it were, [not] classify the action under one of the listed gest a different one.

regards the manifestation of a Gift as something

(e.g.) for the purpose of establishing a “godly nation,” a benevolent society, etc. as wonderful as those goals might be. God gave the gifts *to* the church and *for* the church.

Me: I see you agree that the Gifts have impact outside the Body, but you disagree that any blessing which they bestow, upon any non-church member, can be counted as any part of their “purpose”. I understand you to mean if someone is merciful to another, who is outside the church membership, the blessing to the recipient of mercy is not why God bestowed the Gift of mercy; the reason God gave it was to inspire church members. Or to inspire the lost to become “added to the church”. Likewise when Jesus healed, the blessing which was of value “added to the church”. When Jesus taught, the value of His teaching was not just suffering, unless it was a suffering church member, but the addition to the church. Will not repent, for its own sake, or to convict sinners who still are added to the church, or existing church members are edified or inspired

I wonder if you agree, then, that (1) witnessing in public forums, where our nation decides to apply the principles of God or of Satan, and (2) allowing activists in church to inform their brothers specifically where and when politicians are institutionalizing the very sins which their pastor has preached against in general, is the purpose of the Gift of Governments insofar as it delivers church members from the sins which government is protecting, by clarifying for church members that sin is sin, even if fallen government makes it “legal”? And also by teaching church members how to recognize the subtle tentacles of sin slithering about our schools, our culture, our national discussion, our laws?

Do you agree that ending church censorship of education necessary so church members will stop voting for Satan's agenda, will benefit the Body, by delivering it from God's Judgment which is falling upon our nation and upon all who drive it towards hell?

Mitchell: _____ (Dr. Mitchell has not answered further. However, I am grateful for the generous time he took to address my questions.)

Political History in the Bible

Dr. Mitchell’s bottom line, for why the Gift of “governments” could not possibly equip anyone to witness in those public forums where our nation decides whether to protect the innocent and prosecute criminals or vice versa, is that he sees no spiritual connection between Israel and the United States. Perhaps that drives your view of the Gift of Governments, too.

I do not understand the significance of the question whether or not there is some kind of spiritual connection between Israel and the United States; I would not know how to measure it, if there were. What we can do is study the similarities and differences between God’s ideal government as expressed through Moses and the Prophets, and all other governments, as analyzed in the Word of God. We can study how God advises us to deal with all manner of governments. Then we can study where our government falls between those two extremes, and extract Biblical principles for how to deal with it.

The importance of political theology to Dr. Mitchell’s Gifts theology came forward when I was commenting on the difference between the Church then and now. I wrote:

The primary “ministry”, then, was to those outside the meeting room. 99% of the examples of ministry which God found interesting enough to report were on unsafe, risky, often hostile territory. For example, I know of one miracle in a meeting room: Acts 20:9-12. One out of hundreds reported. A few of those hundreds were even conducted under the scrutiny of Israel’s “Supreme Court/Congress”, the Sanhedrin, amidst pending blasphemy charges, which was a capital offense.

Do churches “minister” not to the world? Are “gifts” not to bless those outside? That thinking explains why churches are so much like gas stations only open on Sunday mornings for two hours, with huge parking lots filled with trucks who park all week, idling, which only get in gear on Sunday mornings long enough to go get enough gas to idle for the coming week.

Preaching and reasoning were conducted in the same variety of places. Often it was what we call today “street preaching”. When it was “daily in the temple”, that would be like a perpetual picket/lobbying of our Congress and Supreme Court.

Dr. Mitchell answered as he had written on page 1 of his book, quoted near the beginning of this article:

I guess the problem I have here is equating Israel with America. The former was called and established by God in a unique way to fulfill the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Those promises still stand. America has never enjoyed that kind of status in the purpose of God. I certainly would commend responsible citizens making their opinions known (i.e. rendering unto Caesar), but would not confuse that with ministry in the body (rendering to God, that which is God’s)

I wish it were enough to secure the pastor’s blessing on “responsible citizens making their opinions known”, but unfortunately almost all pastors are able to agree with that, while at the same time rigidly censoring efforts by their members to educate each other about what opinions would agree with God’s opinions, and to strategize with each other how to make God’s opinions known. Not only would such meetings on church premises be prohibited, but invitations to fellow church members, to meet elsewhere, are routinely censored from church bulletins, announcements, and even word of mouth in church hallways.

Christian activists, equipped by the Gift of “governments”, are driven off their church premises to do these things with members of other churches, with whom they have less in common theologically, and with nonChristians. In such meetings, God is rarely allowed to be quoted; so that even though such meetings may be dominated by Christians motivated by a vision of sin in society gained from their pastors’ sermons, they never open their Bibles in “political” meetings to double check whether the positions they are supporting are God’s positions. Fortunately, they often come close. But opening a Bible to double check a verse produces greater accuracy than trying to remember what the pastor said it says.

It is critical, whether we reduce the Gift of “governments” from a “gift” to a “calling”.

If it is a “gift”, it belongs in church. It is part of the church ministry. Information to the entire body about the existence of a small group exercising it ought not be censored but announced generously. Their reports and recommendations ought to be available to the body.

But if it is a mere “calling”, why, individuals with them may exercise them on their own, without expecting any interest from the church.

At least that is the distinction between the terms which I perceive is made today.

American politics has not been the only casualty of Noninvolvement Theologies. Entire church denominations have split unnecessarily over issues like abortion and sodomy, just because lack of theological consensus among laymen has pulled pastors apart like frayed ropes in a huge tug of war.

This can’t be corrected until Christian witness in political forums is regarded as not merely an OK thing to do outside of church but not inside because it is “controversial”, but as a Biblically authorized ministry of the Church.

My answer to Dr. Mitchell, to which he has not again replied, follows, edited a bit:

America’s founders certainly entertained the opposite vision: that they were founding a “city on the Hill”, a verse claimed by them not because they saw themselves as the sole subjects of prophecy, but because the Matthew 5:14 goal is set before all individuals and “cities”.

Whether their hope had merit or not, it may be an error to attach so much significance to any differences between America and Israel that we strip God’s Word of having anything to say to Satan-inspired forces that enshrine, in our schools and laws, as “good”, what God has called “evil”.

Among my strange Biblical speculations which I have never heard anyone else articulate, is my observation of the similarity between America and the “stone...cut out of the mountain without hands”, a “kingdom which shall never be destroyed” that “shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms”, or all tyranny. Daniel 2:44-45. Not that America IS that stone, which began rolling with the first church, long before America; or that the force of that stone is today that of America alone and not the assaults on tyranny by martyrs across our planet.

But consider that when America was founded, there was nothing but tyranny. Through America’s example, people around the world have slowly been inspired to throw off tyranny and enjoy various levels of freedom.

And today, even while our nation plummets spiritually while churches generally censor activists trying to rouse their brothers to stop exercising their stewardship over their vote for the benefit of Satan, Americans still are the primary supporters of missionaries around the world, while our military restrains the most aggressive of the world's tyrants. In other words, it's not that the spotlight of prophecy is on America, but rather that the natural growth of that God-cut, miracle working stone would logically include some point in time where it would spawn a whole nation, which would be the first of many.

Amos 9:7 says Israel was not unique in being a nation which God watched over and nurtured. "Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?" Israel was not the only recipient of promises for obedience, and prophecies of destruction for disobedience, given by the prophets. Israel was not the only nation with its very own prophet of God: I think of Balaam, although he turned out badly.

It is hard to think of any nation with nothing in common with Israel, since Israel throughout its Biblical history has, from generation to generation, experienced just about every form of government, every level on the righteousness/sin scale, that has ever been in any nation. Israel's government even began with elected representatives: Deuteronomy 1:13. Just as George Washington turned down Congressional offers to make him king, Moses, long before him, ended his tyranny (tyranny in structure, not in beneficence) by delegating his authority to judges below him. He even made the judges below him sovereign, Deut 1:17, leaving it to the discretion of the judges, not to the litigants, whether to appeal. From that point, democracy was characterized as "every man did that which was right in his own eyes", Judges 17:6, 21:25. And then in 1 Samuel 8, Israel returned to tyranny. At first the king was subject to a Constitution - a Rule of Law binding even upon the king, 1 Sam 10:25, Deut 17:18. But prior to Josiah, the Constitution was completely lost, just like we are in danger of losing it today.

No matter the form of government, the duty of righteousness towards sin has been constant. The greater the wickedness, the greater the need for prophets.

In America, "we the people" are officially acknowledged as THE government. The ones in charge. We are a government "of, by, and for the people". But to a very profound degree, that, too, is only the acknowledgment of the dynamics of every government that has ever been. Even the worst tyrants of history "feared the people" (1Sa 15:24 Mr 11:32 12:12 Lu 20:19 22:2 Ac 5:26). They feared any truths that might push the people beyond their limits of tolerance for evil. Announcing only once that "the emperor has no clothes" will not topple a regime, but only make it the butt of jokes. But announcing it over and over again, especially combined with fresh news of additional outrages, will push the hot water from 211 degrees to that magical 212 degrees, that boiling point where regimes are replaced.

This explains why God's judgments fell upon the citizens of tyrants as well as upon tyrants themselves. Missions directly attack tyrannies. Our armies only indirectly attack them, by confining them to their own people. Missions prepare individual citizens of tyrants (1) with a vision of righteousness, a standard by which the emperor's nakedness is readily apparent; and (2) who are themselves righteous, which creates the possibility of replacing the tyranny with a free government. Governments can only be as free as their citizens are righteous.

Freedom is hardly confined to Old Testament theology. The word shows up 44 times in the New Testament. The greatest sinful action of all human history, the only one of which God says that each and everyone who does it will go to Hell, is an extremely political sin: taking the Mark of the Beast, which will enable the ultimate world tyrant to seize and maintain power. Although the primary sinner is the government, the Beast, each and every citizen who enables it will share the judgment of Hell.

Even today, the concrete is being poured for Big Brother's Road to Hell, in the name of tracking systems like the Real ID Act and the E-Verify System, for the purpose of deporting "illegal aliens", another scheme threatened with Hell in Matthew 25:43, 46. And who is heading up the paving crew? Bible-believing "Moral Conservative" Christians. Why? Because communication between pastors and activists has been so miserable for the past couple of generations that pastors are not informed by activists of what is being planned, so pastors are unable to warn activists of God's judgment for those things.

Freedom is unique to Biblical theology. It certainly is not found in Islam, or in Hinduism with its Caste System which makes the difference between whether you are a ruler ("Kshatriya") or an untouchable

an article of faith and a matter of birth, and advises worshipers not to be too eager to better their circumstances because the worse they are, the more “Karma” they burn off.

Unfortunately, few Americans today know they have the Bible to thank for their freedom; consequently, they are far too willing to keep it closed rather than “offend” Satan’s followers.

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel.” Mark 16:15.

All the world, except, of course, where people decide whether to protect sin and prosecute the innocent?

All the world, except, of course, where Christian witness is persecuted because the people you are witnessing to have the political power to destroy you?

Is that what Jesus meant?

To the extent our churches today have no “ministry” to the world, so that its “gifts” do not bless anyone outside its walls, our churches are like stations only open on Sunday mornings for two hours, with huge parking lots filled with trucks who park all week, idling, which only got in gear on Sunday mornings long enough to go get enough gas to idle for the coming week.

Today’s American church is in a coma all week except for Sunday morning when it wakes up to take enough nourishment to make it through the next coma.

Today’s American church suffers spiritual constipation. We are all the time “getting fed”, and little of the time passing it on. Thus we do not risk persecution. However, all those years of gorging, without passing anything on, have made The Body pretty sick.