

WE STILL HAVE A VOICE

I. Foundation of Religious Liberty

At a time in our nation when many of us think we are losing our religious liberty, it presents an opportunity to remember where it came from, how it created America, and how, if we ever lose it, we can get it back.

You will find the origin of liberty is rooted in the laws of nature and nature's God, a term we may not all be familiar with, but most of us remember it from the Declaration of Independence. This principle (the laws of nature and nature's God) is not generally understood nor rarely taught, but it unlocks the key to a powerful revelation, the one possession we have that no one can take from us—our voice. By the end of this article, you will see your words have impact and can change the world for good no matter how spiritually dark it becomes.

Going back to the Founding documents, we discover that the Founding Fathers considered various political theories, but thanks be to God they settled on the legal philosophy of an English jurist, William Blackstone, whose legal commentaries affirmed the law of nature and nature's God on the basis of all things—the Biblical account of creation!! So the laws of nature refer to more than science or gravity, but to the very moral nature that was put by the Creator in every person's DNA at his birth. The laws of nature and nature's God then is the law of moral conduct implanted by nature's God in the human mind.

There is more: your right of self-determination is given to you as your birth right by the Creator of the universe. Along with this comes the freedom to speak, think for yourself, and govern yourself according to your own conscience. When of your own free will, you voluntarily conform your ways to moral principles, it will change your private life and overflow into your public life for good.

It was on this basis—the laws of nature and nature's God—that the Founding Fathers purposed the laws the government of the people make to govern the actions of the people must conform to the moral law. So the Founders incorporated the law of nature's God (the basis of inalienable rights) right in the Declaration for Independence, but it was not buried there. It was put into the Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments to the U. S. Constitution), the nation's foundation. How miraculous is that?

Yet this miracle did not start with the Founding Fathers, but with Jesus who saw America from the cross. It was there that the back of tyrants was broken, which paved the way for the restoration of religious liberty. A little bit of history for you: Through the 500 years up to the time of Christ, Israel had been occupied by armies. Having no king since the Babylonian exile, the Jews were ruled by successive empires. When their long sought after King arrived on the scene, Israel had become a province of the Roman Empire, always looking over its shoulders. So into the mix walked their King with a mission to set His people free from tyranny so they could serve Him without fear of government restraints. *“That he would grant unto us, that we been delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life”* (Lk. 1:74-75). He proceeded to teach the people how to govern themselves through Kingdom principles so they could live in freedom and liberty. So important were these keys to the Kingdom that Jesus commanded the Apostles, as part of ‘the great commission,’ to teach disciples to observe them (Matt. 28:20). But the Jews rejected their King and the promise fell to the Gentiles.

So when Jesus liberated mankind from the spirit of tyranny on the cross, it was a new day. A new nation would be created from the spoils/victory of the cross, and under it people would have religious liberty with the concurrent right to govern themselves without government

restraints. It started with a covenant between God and a people longing to be liberated from an English tyrant. A door opened for political freedom, something people everywhere longed for—the right of self-determination. We have in America what the Apostles did not have. Yet, they were not silent, because they knew their religious liberty came from God. Yet today, though we have political freedom, we seem to have lost our voice because we depend too much on the political system to preserve religious liberty, when that power abides in us (wherever we are) to give voice and moral leadership.

You will see in the section immediately following that moral power to secure religious liberty is not dependent upon what people in government do, nor diminished by it. Some are motivated by moral instinct and others by evil, but nevertheless religious liberty has endured for over 400 years, predating the War of Independence to our Pilgrim Fathers, and all the way back to the cross. In spite of world wars to rob America of its religious liberty, the nation could not be conquered, because the will of the people refused to surrender it, but that alone would not have preserved religious liberty. It was faith in God's power alone, and not secular power, that rescued the nation from ruthless dictatorships and preserved religious liberty for another generation. The people played a part, proving that moral power (given to every person by his Creator) drives religious liberty and is diminished only by what we do or fail to do.

II. The Power of a Voice to Change the World

The power of our words fitly spoken in faith can alter circumstances. When we see people going down the wrong road, neighbors torn up by bitterness, oppressed and without hope, this is when we break our silence and use our voice to speak God's hope and comfort to them in their hour of need. We never know if our words will be handfuls of purpose sent by God to someone sitting in obscurity. Perhaps desperate and longing for his life to have meaning, he may build upon our words and take them to greater heights than we could ever imagine.

One such person was Abraham Lincoln. Wanting to rise above the cyclical lifestyle into which he was born, he was motivated by the promises in the Declaration of Independence to make a difference in the world. He clung to the words of Thomas Jefferson that all men are created equal and became a historical figure himself as he used his voice against the inhumanity of slavery. The point is Thomas Jefferson's voice still could be heard 82 years later. Lincoln picked up on it, and in return, his words struck a chord in people who might not have otherwise considered him, and elevated him to the highest office in the land. There acting upon his God-ordained authority, he laid a foundation for race reconciliation other civil rights leaders have built upon for over 150 years. His faith in the Biblical principles of equality (rooted in the laws of nature and nature's God) saved lives, our nation, and changed the world. Lincoln's words still speak today.

Building upon the foundation set in place by Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., stood on solid ground to continue the fight for racial equality. In breaking new ground, he paved the way for John Lewis, who would become a respected Civil Rights leader, and later, a U.S. Congressman. In Congress, Lewis never hesitated to speak with moral authority. At a critical vote in history, he said to his colleagues and all America, "When you see something not right, not just, not fair, you have a moral obligation to say something. To do something. Our children and their children will ask us, 'What did you do? What did you say?'" It was faith in God that moved both leaders.

Likewise, we also know that God's words spoken through our lips have a destiny to fulfill (Isa. 59:21). Imagine the impact our words fitly spoken might have on people today hungering for God? Something powerful begins to resonate in the heart of men when they hear testimonies of faith and moral courage. Dormant seed may start to sprout and give meaning and direction to their life. This is Jesus fulfilling His promise, ***“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth will draw all people to Myself”*** (Jn. 12:32 NKJV). What we do and say here in the name of Jesus to our neighbors, friends, and anybody else who will listen one day will bear fruit. As we lift up the Lord Jesus Christ, and the principles He taught about brotherly love, lost souls pulled away by the deceptive philosophies of the world may begin to put their trust in Him, for Jesus promised to draw all people to Himself if He was lifted up in the earth. We should not forget, though, that the same power of transmission is given to evil speakers to corrupt minds through deception, but truth fitly spoken through our lips has power to pierce the darkness, purge the mind, and restore right thinking. Someone, somewhere hearing truth will build upon it, for God's Word never comes back void (Isa. 55:11).

This is the power of our voice, and we must use it in this hour, never forgetting that whenever we lift up the name of Jesus, He promised to draw people to Himself. That people will come to our light is a promise from the Old Testament, and it is speaking to us this day: *“Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light...”* (Isa. 60:1-3 NKJV)—but not if we are silent!

No matter which way the political winds blow, we always have a voice to lift up Kingdom principles, but there is an obstacle that will neutralize our voice.

III. The Seduction of Worldly Philosophies

We cannot reconcile the world to Christ if we are driven by party affiliation and its agenda, and not God's agenda. The Bible warns us to walk in truth and to be especially aware of the seductive power of secular philosophies, which will draw us away from it. *“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ”* (Col. 2:6-8 NKJV).

A great part of the worldly culture in which we are a part is partisan politics, an arm of human government. By its very nature, it stokes division and permeates the culture to control the narrative. If we do not distance ourselves from political infighting and the heated rhetoric that accompanies the struggle, our attention will be diverted to the fight and we will jump in. We do not have to go far to see its impact on families and friends in conflict refusing to listen to each other, in schools and universities cutting off debate, in sowing discord among God's people, and in state and local units of government scrambling to hold on to power.

We should know that the spirit of the world is behind this to push God's people in particular into the whirlwind of public debate and divide them, not only among themselves, but also between them and their God (Jas. 3:9-12). This would effectively neutralize and possibly silence their voice. The plan is to create such confusion in our minds that it would put a muzzle over our mouth to confront evil. Locked into partisan messaging, God's people might give heed to lies and start to talk like the world, forgetting that irreverent speech increases to greater ungodliness (2 Tim. 2:16). And then, God forbid, the potential is present to become a false witness. Walking lockstep with a political/religious system is the ultimate seduction, and it will separate us from God. Never is it more important than now for the Church of the living God to

have an independent voice and stay above the fray, so that when it speaks, the world will listen (Isa. 60:1-3).

Once again, we must choose who we will serve—God or the worldly system (representing mammon or wealth). We can only be faithful to one or the other (Matt. 6:24). If we choose to be friends with a political system, and mix truth and error to sustain it, we can be no friend of God (Jas. 4:4). And because we are tossed about by contrary winds, one spiritual and the other political, we cannot see clearly to be the salt and light to a nation looking for moral leadership not tainted with the world's corruption. In decades past, God winked at our ignorance, but today is commanding us to come out of the worldly system—the untoward generation—and reverse course. If we do this, we will see that the road will no longer be crooked, but straight. Reconciled with God, we will find the grace to walk in truth, independent of the worldly system, and get our voice back.

Navigating Troubled Waters. Some questions remain. “How can we impartially judge explosive reports vying for our attention”? “Can we distinguish truth from deception in such a partisan atmosphere and escape evil? We can if we turn inward to Jesus, and for two reasons: One, because Jesus IS the Truth, and the way out, and we must cling to Him. The Bible states that if we receive God's words and hide His commandments in our heart, SO THAT we incline our ears to wisdom and our heart to understanding, we will understand the fear of God (which restrains us). This is wisdom. And if we depart from evil, we will find the knowledge of God. We will know which path to go on, and if we walk in it, the Lord will be our buckler, or our defense and protector (Prov. 2:1-7). *“But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely and shall be quiet from fear of evil”* (Prov. 1:33).

It is in turning inward and choosing not to feed into an evil report that we will get the mind of God with whom there is no partiality (Rom. 2:11). *“Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the LORD understand all”* (Prov. 28:5 NKJV). In times of spiritual darkness, in every issue, what should captivate us is not what the political party of our choice is saying, but what God is saying to us, because He does not change with the fluctuation of the political winds. Where we stand with God determines our position on every issue and our readiness, or reticence, to represent His righteousness in the earth. God is waking up His people to see not only the moral decay all around us, but also to see what He wants to do in the midst of it.

The second reason we turn to Jesus is because He has already overcome the world and all it stands for: *“These things [the work of the Spirit] I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (Jn. 16:33). In the Greek dictionary, the word “tribulation” means pressure, oppression, stress, anguish, adversity, affliction. So, when Jesus “overcame” the world, He prevailed over all these things we are encountering, and this is why if we follow Him, we will have peace in the midst of the storm. If we make Jesus our go-to Person, the worldly system will have no power over us. God's quickening Spirit teaches us to discern truth from error so we are not swallowed up by false testimonies of the worldly system. He will say, “This is the way; walk in it.” No matter what the world says, we will have power to walk with God.

In His prayer in the 17th chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus said that, while He was with the Apostles “in the world,” He lost no one, except the one who left following Him. Jesus will be with us too “in the world” if we follow Him, for He said, *“...lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age...”* (Matt. 28:20). If we walk in the truth of God's Word and not the philosophies of the world, God will speak through us, and our words will not pass away because truth fitly spoken is destined to bear fruit.

Our Founding Fathers talked about the Bible and here we are some 250 years later talking about what they said. Consider Noah Webster and his brother Daniel. They left behind a legacy. Their words to the nation reflected not only their faith in God, but also their willingness to give witness to it, and 160 years later, their voices can still be heard. Noah (1758-1843), a statesman and educator, said, *“All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, injustice, oppression, slavery and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.”* Noah’s brother, Daniel (1782-1852), a politician, painted a picture of where we are today with a stark reminder that even in the midst of evil, the voice of truth will speak if we give witness to it. *“If truth be not diffused, then error will be. If God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy. If the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will. If the power of the Gospel is not felt throughout the length and breadth of this land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness will reign without mitigation or end.”* (Quotes taken from *America’s God and Country-Encyclopedia of Quotations*, by William J. Federer.)

In a secular culture increasingly hostile to God, more teaching is needed about our Christian heritage. Many voices have been silenced in part because they do not understand what the Founders put in place to preserve religious liberty. As a result, there are broken down walls that need to be repaired. One of them is the wall of separation between the church and state. Many fail to see that this is more than an injunction against the establishment of a national religion, and that it works in tandem with religious liberty to give us a voice, not to hinder it.

Among those who saw it was President Ronald Reagan. He once said society is poisoned when theological underpinnings are removed, and when people of faith leave it bereft of belief, the powers that be, left alone, will court corruption. The Church, he said, must never be an arm of the state, for it has its own “realm of authority” to make its claims.¹ The power to make its claims lies in the separation from the state, because then God’s people have authority to freely and independently call out injustice and corruption, just as much as they do in promoting Biblical principles of prosperity. Our forbearers were not so fortunate, for they were forbidden to openly live out their faith in God without fear of recrimination from those holding the reins of power, but we can speak truth to power. Martin Luther King demonstrated this in his pursuit of racial equality: he shifted the plight of the black people from the economic/ political realm to the moral/spiritual realm and broke racial barriers.

So you can see that religious liberty stands between tyranny and freedom, and that the separation of church and state advances it, because it gives us a voice to counteract evil. Human government is slow to react to moral injustice and needs salt and light to reverse course. The Civil War proved that government was at a loss to fix the root causes of inequality, racism, and systemic hatred that turned people against each other, because they were rooted (as they are today) in man’s heart. Therefore, the message America needs to hear today from God’s people is one of reconciliation. Only Biblical reconciliation will bind up the nation’s wounds. It is part of God’s end-time plan for revival and restoration (Mal. 4:4-6). Please see article entitled, “Taking Reconciliation to the Nation.” [Click here for Table of Contents.](#)

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If you have a question pertaining to this article, would like to share your comments, or make a request, please click here: [Click here.](#) If you would like to see an overview of a Bible Study on America’s origin and need for national reconciliation, [Click here.](#)

¹ Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast in Dallas on August 23, 1984.