Freedom and Responsibility

A Call to Action!

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

In these brief words are the foundations of God’s purpose in mankind. Man is not created as an observer or as a robot, but as a participant in the ongoing work of creation that God intends. Man is to ‘rule over’ creation. Man is made responsible. It is this relationship between responsibility and freedom that underpins the whole of human history. There is a direct corollary between the amount of responsibility and the amount of freedom. That is why God allowed man options from the very beginning. He did not intent to control man but to allow him to succeed or fail, win or lose on the basis of his actions and sense of responsibility. Freedom is a God thing!

God’s control of His creation is in the genetic structure of the elements He created. He made thing to work a certain way. These principles of creation or laws of nature, if you will, are the means by which God exerts His ongoing influence into the creative process. Mankind is not independent from God or His purpose, but we are invited to fellowship with God and know His ways or to go our own way and learn from experience that which we will not learn by obedience. That is, we are not compelled to go against our own will, but it sure makes things work much better when we do things the way they were created to be.

The actions of humankind is initially to run from God. Cain went out from the presence of God and built his own city. The history of man from that time on is one of the struggle between human control and freedom, of responsibility and patronage. They who rule over others in human forms of government, always assume some God given right to do so and assume that they have better information and a higher intellect to know what is best for those they rule over. This elite assumption always ends up stripping men of freedom and of centralizing responsibility at the top of the governmental structure.

The results of this propensity for man to control other men always leads to the same tragic end – rebellion. There is something inherently free in the human spirit and for creation to work as it was supposed to be, responsibility needs to be given away to everyone, not held by the few. When people are responsible that seek freedom to carry out their responsibilities. When they have no power, they become dependent and unproductive. Power was never to be held but shared. Everyone who is responsibility must have the freedom to be responsible for their administration of life and the power to do it. That is God’s order and that is the way it works.

When human social systems tap into this principle, they work. When they set up contrary systems, they do not work. God does not need to control the details of life. He can leave us free to learn and explore. He simply allows us to be frustrated by our error until it dawns on us that there is a better way.

The common assumption is that if I submit to God and His oversight, He will take all the fun out of life and I will be bound by religious activity. The opposite is true. When we submit to the Creator, He places us back in freedom and responsibility. He invites us to partner with Him in the ongoing work of redemption and restoring the planet. If we choose to not walk with Him, then true bondage and control happens. We become slaves of the passions and addictions of the flesh.

John 8:36 - Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

We often think of spiritual principles as something ethereal and apart from our social world or of the day to day affairs of living in this world. But the greater reality is, what is true spiritually has practical application within our physical world. Freedom, whether in the spirit or on the ground, is a God thing. Whenever we see bondage, if we are partnering with God in the administration of His life on this earth, then we have a responsibility to speak freedom to it. This is not some religious separatism or spiritual escapism.

You don’t get to walk away from that which is ungodly in our world. We are here as representatives of the King and as such are to be busy bringing the kingdom of God into being in the now. The role of the believer is not to hold out and survive until we die and go to heaven but to bring dominion over creation back to the King of Kings.

Although we acknowledge a dual kingdom relationship, in which the Kingdom of God co-exists with the kingdom of man, our involvement within the kingdom of man is part of our context in bringing dominion to the planet. We are here to invade every avenue of human life and to see redemption worked in it. Love does not ignore human suffering or the tyranny of human arrogance. We have bought a separation attitude from American liberal philosophy, that the church should not be involved in politics, which means with people’s lives. Separation of church and state in its original meaning and intent is that human government should not be involved in creating or authorizing or establishing religion. It does not mean that our Christian principals and mission should stop the gates of the city. We have a responsibility to speak principle and grace into all areas of life.

Some might ask, then how does that differ from the Islam objective of imposing Sharia Law on a nation or a state? The simple answer is, Christ acknowledged the existence of two kingdoms and proposed that we cooperate with and walk beside human government…

Mark 12:17 - And Jesus answered and said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marveled at Him.

It is not that we should overthrow human government, but we should in our role as citizens of this earthly kingdom, effect the principles of redemption within it as we can. God did not restrict the Christian from speaking peace and righteousness into the world in which we live. In fact, we are responsible to see it work in the human family wherever we are.

Does that mean that we should be political? If we understand what politics is, then we should be responsible. Politics is simply the systems of the administration of group dynamics. It is part of any group, church, club or organization. It is the means by which people govern and structure social groups. That’s all it is. And it is everywhere. What we usually object to is the dirty tricks people play in manipulating the system, or in the nature of power hungry people who seem to always come to the top and rule. I agree, politics is dirty and needs to be cleaned up. So let me tell you a little story…

Years ago I worked for General Motors as a consultant to GMC Truck dealers. It was a fun job, going from place to place and discovering the problems dealers were having and attempting to work with them to find a solution. I liked the job. The part I did not like, was the politics.

It all came into focus one day when I was telling a Christian friend about a company party that we attended the night before. All of the dealers and company people gathered for dinner, some entertainment, a few speeches and dancing afterwards. I watched as various low level manager worked the boss, and his wife and noted that some of the low level manager’s wives were not averse to making points with the boss, in my opinion, inappropriately. I reacted and was not happy about the politicking and positioning I was seeing.

As I was telling my friend about it, I voiced my objection and reaction and stated that I was not going to any more of these political nightmares. He looked at me with quizzical eyes and said, “So you chose to be an observer rather than a participant, and because the political interaction is abhorrent to you, you will walk away and have no influence into the setting that God has placed you in?”

I was dumbstruck. How could this fellow make me responsible for the behavior of others, jockeying for position? What was I supposed to do about other people’s behavior? What influence could I have without having a greater position from which to set the context for such meetings?

I thought about it for a while and then felt that still small voice inside my head speaking words I really did not want to hear at the time, but words that brought understanding and freedom. He said, “If the corruption continues, and you do nothing, then you are part of it. If you will not involve yourself then you consent to the problem. You are here to bring redemption in my love, not to observe and complain.” I wept…

I wish I could tell you that I knew what to do, but I did not. So, I asked the Lord to give me wisdom for my dealer’s problems and started seeing things turn around for them. The district that I served was last in the nation in per capita truck sales. I had some ideas and they worked. In a short time, sales began to rise and the district was no longer last. The dealers were happy and made it known to the corporation.

Then we had another meeting, this time a luncheon to give out awards. I was surprised to receive an award for making the greatest turnaround in the company. My district had gone from last place in the nation to first place in the nation. I was thankful, but I knew that it was not me who did it. I took the award and said nothing, but something had changed. My influence in the politics of the company was different. I was consulted by other managers and treated differently by the boss.

It was not to last long, for the President of our Division called and asked me to come to Pontiac, Michigan to talk to him. When I arrived he offered me the National Sales Training Manager position. So I returned home, told Linda what had happened, and then we moved, not to Pontiac but to Reno. It was time to step out and fulfill our call to ministry.

Our world is a mess. We can see it. We can understand it. We can stand aside and be the observer and the critic or we can speak into it and affect it. If the condition of our world remains the same, and we do nothing, then we are the problem - we consent to it.

It is not a matter of forming a Christian political party or of taking over an existing party. It is a matter of involvement, of influence and of actively working to make this world the kind of place where justice, peace and freedom reign.

I apologize to my friends who sincerely believe that they should not get involved in politics. I understand the perspective. But may I ask if you are not involved in that you are a citizen and a contributor of tax funds to our government. Then are you not involved already? The question is not are you involved but of what role you will play in bringing God’s grace and redemption to our world.

I am feeling some old feelings. I am hearing some old counsel. I am probably not going to be able to just watch and criticize. Just the way I am now! God already dealt with my hesitance. Ready???

Pastor Dave