

## Regarding Christian Rights

Whether or not we (believers) have societal rights to which we can appeal is ultimately a biblical matter. Christians get their instruction from holy writ and thus how we conduct our lives in society is informed therein.

God's ancient precedent for citizens is that there needs be government for the procurement of safety and peace – not guaranteed entitlements and prosperity. The LORD commanded His people to always be equitable to the foreigner among them. Further in history, it was (and now is) that God's people are the aliens in this world (Lev. 25:23; 1 Pet. 2:11). Jesus alluded that we ought to follow the edicts of governors so long as they don't contradict God's instruction (cf. Mk. 12:17). Furthermore, Paul and Peter affirmed that we are to obey the laws of the land because they are for our good (which implies legitimate government e.g. Rom. 13:1ff.; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-14; cf. Jn. 19:11; Dan. 2:21). Nevertheless, Paul appealed to his earthly social rights as a Roman citizen of several occasions (e.g. Ac. 16:37-8; 21:39; 22:25; 25:11).

However, there were occasions where civil disobedience was the obedient thing to do (Acts 5:40). And there were no small consequences (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23-28) and martyrdom for the OT Prophets and NT Apostles (cf. Rev. 6:9-11; 20:4).

Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind by either country, speech, or customs; the fact is, they nowhere settle in cities of their own; they use no peculiar language; they cultivate no eccentric mode of life.... Yet while they dwell in both Greek and non-Greek cities, as each one's lot was cast, and conform to the customs of the country in dress, food, and mode of life in general, the whole tenor of their way of living stamps it as worthy of admiration and admittedly extraordinary. They reside in their respective countries, but only as aliens. They take part in everything as citizens and put up with everything as foreigners. *Every foreign land is their home, and every home a foreign land.*<sup>22 1</sup>

If the above paragraph is an acceptable interpretation of Paul's legislative appeals, we can now employ the U. S. Constitution as citizens of such. Not merely because it happens to be where we live but because such is founded on biblical principles.

Now it is true that we are to give our lives for the Gospel's sake (Rev. 12:11) but this does not equate to us laying down our rights for the sake of mere compliance to an overly aggressive government. Why would we work against ourselves by promoting the stifling of freedom of religion, speech, property, bearing arms, and other freedoms? It is no fiction that China currently is a nefarious police state with a social credit program where each citizen is given an amount of points and each can either accrue or lose points according to their behavior. This is enabled via a myriad of cameras for facial recognition purposes. If the State sees you as an obedient (not independent thinker) you'll be rewarded with points and if the State decides you are misbehaving, it will deduct points and you can end up losing vacations, credit cards, and even employment! If you think this is strange, I'll do you one better, namely, many of the Chinese

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<sup>22</sup> *Letter to Diognetus* 5.1–5 (ACW 6:138–39) (emphasis added).

<sup>1</sup> Pelikan, J. (2005). [Acts](#) (p. 243). Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

love it! We see the seeding of such in the USA. I have found myself quoting Benjamin Franklin often lately viz. “He who would sacrifice liberty for temporary security deserves neither safety nor liberty.” Those who approve of such programs in China are applauding the sacrifices of freedom for an illusion of security.

Now, back to the account in Acts 22:25: Matthew Henry wrote: The manner of his speaking plainly intimates what a holy security and serenity of mind this good man enjoyed, not disturbed either with anger or fear in the midst of all those indignities that were done him, and the danger he was in. The Romans had a law (it was called *lex Semproniana*), that if any magistrate did chastise or condemn a freeman of Rome, *indicta causa*—*without hearing him speak for himself, and deliberating upon the whole of his case*, he should be liable to the sentence of the people, who were very jealous of their liberties. It is indeed the privilege of every man not to have wrong done him, except it be proved he has done wrong; as it is of every Englishman by *Magna Charta* not to be dis-seized of his life or freehold, but by a verdict of twelve men of his peers.<sup>2</sup> James Boice comments: What is the role of the state? In the Western world, we have fanciful ideas of what we think the state should do for us today. But the role of the state as the Bible speaks about it is just two-fold. The state exists: (1) to establish, maintain, and assure justice; and (2) to provide for the defense of its citizens. Justice and defense.<sup>3</sup>

Would Jesus wear a mask because the authorities illegitimately mandated such? Did Jesus do as the Pharisees mandated or did He appeal to a higher law? See Lu. 6:1-5 cf. Mat. 12:1-8; Mk. 2:23-8.

There is a plethora of documented studies that face masks do very little in society to stop the spread of COVID 19. In no way, matter, shape, or form am I promoting that all citizens not wear masks. In fact, I know not one soul who has purported such nonsense. However, I am saying that it is not government’s duty or prerogative to mandate citizens to wear them. It is relevant and greatly significant that – even with the proven inflated Corona positive cases, we have less COVID deaths in 2020 than flu deaths in 2019. And we have supposed vaccinations for flu!!! Why no panic and mask mandating for flu every year? I know why but do you?

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<sup>2</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 2167). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>3</sup> Boice, J. M. (1997). [\*Acts: an expositional commentary\*](#) (p. 373). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.