



Pastor's Comments

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Northampton Assembly of God

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Liberty or License?

Many people today, specially those who claim to be political liberals or human rights advocates, would tell us that liberty means the right to do whatever you want to do. That is, of course, providing that you harm no one else, nor infringe on their absolute right to do what they want. This is not liberty, but rather license.

Genuine liberty, however, is freedom from the compulsions of our passions, ego, and self will. This liberty comes about only through the working of the grace of God. Before His grace becomes effective in our heart we are in bondage as Jesus declared in John 8:34, ***"...whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."*** Proverbs 5:22 states, ***"His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins."***

So then, how should civil government act in protecting liberty, but not enabling license? The duty of civil government is to provide for a just and orderly society by proscribing those outward acts that disobey and dishonor God's law. It cannot, however, reach matters of conscience. Our Pilgrim forebears may or may not have overreached by compelling citizens to attend church services, but they certainly did so when they banished Anne Hutchinson and drove Roger Williams to Rhode Island because they disagreed with prevailing church dogma.

Government may keep order by requiring external submission to the law of God, but it **can never compel the heart change needed to liberate man. Only the grace of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, can accomplish that!**

– Submitted by church member, Carl Edwards