

Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you. (Deu 9:24)

Today is the 4th of July, 2021, the day we're all supposed to be thumping our chests and shouting "merica, yeah!!! 'merica!!!!" I'm sure this comes as a complete shock to you, but I have no plans of doing so. I will, however, take some time with you to reflect on the reality of our nation and frame up a little bit of our place in it.

This nation was born out of stone-cold stark rebellion 245 years ago today, as the official marker puts it. Let me start my discourse today with a very direct statement – there is nothing to celebrate here. There should be mourning and woe, sackcloth and ashes, not only for the grievousness of today's sin, but for the fact that our nation was born in this state.

While you look around and see all the inhabitants of the land partying and blowing things up celebrating, see what is being celebrated, i.e. American independence, for what it is – a base rebellion against God that set in motion this current state of affairs, where children are being force-fed the lie that they can choose their gender, that there are no rules to follow, that there is no God and there is no Hell. From its literal beginning, this nation and its zeitgeist were based in the philosophy of "the sky is red".

Listen to these words

"We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness—-That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

For those unfamiliar, those are some of the opening words of the Declaration of Independence, the document upon which the United States of America is officially founded and established.

This is some very flowery and eloquent language, meant to arouse emotion and strong sentiment. It was carefully crafted and put together by some very smart men – Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman and Roger Livingston, all of whom were great wordsmiths. There are no words out of place, nothing that was not intended in its sentiment, notions or intent. I daresay none of these men put more toil or effort into any other single document they wrote, and this collection wrote a **tremendous** volume of words.

The point is that what they meant to say, they said. Nothing was really left in a state where it was open to interpretation. They didn't say anything that they didn't mean to, and the message is very clear – we are in charge, the people know best and no one has the right to say otherwise. The mob runs the show.

Now, you might be sitting there asking yourself “self, what is he talking about here, the oppression of the British was horrific and the colonists had no choice, they were being taxed within an inch of their lives, they had no freedom, and the whole reason the colonies existed was to run away from the religious persecution in England. The Constitution gave us our freedoms and the First Amendment gives us the ability to worship how we want and preach on the streets!”

To your self I would say that your comment is based in a nice bit of indoctrination which demonstrates the slithering hiss found in those very eloquent words written by men apparently devoid of the slightest shred of Godliness. What you've been spoon-fed is the history as the victors wish it to be known. I asked around and not a single person I asked – including several young people who are supposedly getting the greatest education ever offered in this country – knew that there was a “Declaration of Dependence”. Depending on who you can find discussing it, anywhere from five hundred to almost eight hundred people signed it, compared to the anemic fifty-six that signed the Declaration of Independence, supposedly “representing the people”. The people largely did not want rebellion. That's just one little piece of the lie perpetrated to keep this farce of “freedom and liberty” afloat.

The base rebellion that this nation is founded on is very cleverly contained in these words

*“That to secure these Rights, **Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed**”*

Those are some really great sounding words, that just ring of good old-fashioned sense. You can't rule over me if I don't give consent. I can always rebel against you and form some other government with some other people if I don't like the way you govern me. Yeah, that sounds like a good way to operate. It makes you feel good to think in those terms. You're in control and in real power, you're conceding your power to someone else willingly. Makes you feel powerful, doesn't it? It fits right in with your free-will doctrine, huh? Gives you a nice fuzzy feeling inside, I bet!

But that's not scriptural in the least

*“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For **there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.** Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”* (Rom 13:1-2)

There have been some recent sermons on this concept, and by reference I hereby incorporate their content, and while I don't intend to re-deliver those words I may hit some of the highlights again. In this environment where there is literally anti-government rebellion all around us, from the storming of the US Capitol to the ongoing riots in Portland, to the whole zeitgeist that there is no reason to obey the police, there is some need to keep this clear in our minds and hearts.

I want you all to be very clear on this truth. From the inception of this nation, very smart, very sophisticated writers used the power of their minds, given to them by their Creator, to rebel against Him in creating a nation that served their interests. To propagate that rebellion to the masses, they skillfully put a veneer of Godliness on their rebellion using terms like "Creator" and "Supreme Judge".

Samuel made God's view of rebellion very clear

"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." (1Sa 15:23)

Why witchcraft, you might ask? Well, the word translated witchcraft here means divination. Divination is the attempt to gain knowledge of unknown things by some sort of supernatural means – means other than seeking wisdom from God. To rebel against God is to declare yourself wise enough and smart enough to answer the questions that rise in your heart, and to try to see the future is to reject His providence and control of it. It is calling on other gods! It is supplanting the power and righteousness of the Creator with something – anything – else.

Rebellion is called out here it seems as more than just simple disobedience. Samuel calls what Saul does rejecting God. Certainly, in his own eyes, Saul had done a small thing, really. But the commandment was very clear

"Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." (1Sa 15:3)

The Lord wanted a very explicit and specific thing done. Instead of doing that thing, Saul took liberties, allowing the people to take of the spoil, and instead of slaying Agag, King of the Amalekites, he kept him alive. The Lord didn't say He wanted the fatlings or any other thing sacrificed to Him, – He wanted it all utterly destroyed in fulfillment of the command He gave when the Israelites crossed the Jordan:

"Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it." (Deu 25:19)

This wasn't a war of plunder, it was a war of righteous annihilation, in remembrance of the wrongs Amalek committed against God's people. Saul rejected that commandment and treated lightly the vengeance of the Almighty God. If you spend any time considering this point later, compare Saul's treatment of this simple commandment to David's very cautious and careful treatment of Saul as God's anointed, *even after Samuel had anointed him king*. It's a stark difference.

In sacrificing the spoil, the people weren't honoring God, they were honoring themselves via a great theater of religiosity. They rejected the reason for this battle, the grave and serious nature of it, and behaved like brute beasts, not the arm of the Lord exacting His vengeance at His appointed time. In acting this way, they rebelled, and Saul was to blame for it as the leader. He should have put a stop to it immediately and shown his obedience the way Samuel does – by slaying Agag. Saul allowed a veneer of religiosity to be spread around on the rebellion like a nice layer of peanut butter, but it didn't fool Samuel. God's commandments are always clear. The reasons and causes for them may not be obvious, but that's not our concern. Executing them is our concern. Saul rejected that responsibility, which as King was an especially grievous sin.

Like Saul, these founding fathers very deftly used religion as a robe to surround their rebellion and give it a semblance of legitimacy, even righteousness. They used preachers and their pulpits as the primary conduits of message delivery and enlisted those preachers in their subterfuge – muddling the idea of religious liberty with civil liberty. There were preachers all over this country abusing and wresting verses like

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” (Gal 5:1)

That verse, given its context (and others like it – Luke 4:18, Rom 8:21, 1Co 8:9, 2Co 3:17, Gal 5:13, Jas 1:25, etc.), has not one iota of application to anything calling itself “civil liberty”. By civil liberty I ultimately mean breaking away from government oversight you deem tyrannical, oppressive, or you just don't like. Acts 24:23 and 26:32 are examples where the word translated liberty does mean physical and or civic freedom

“And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.” (Act 24:23)

“Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.” (Act 26:32)

But the word liberty even in these two verses means different things in the Greek. To try and apply the liberty Paul writes about to a government you believe to be

oppressing you is such a violent wresting of the scripture I don't know how those who spoke the words weren't struck down by God at the moment they spoke or wrote them.

Interestingly enough, there were preachers during those years preceding outright rebellion, who held firm in the notion, and preached it regularly, that rebellion against the King was a sin and that revolution would bring the downfall of the colonies eventually. They preached from Romans 13 with vigor and at times at no small cost to their livelihood and wellbeing. You don't learn about these folks in your general history classes, except with epithets and as being lumped in with the likes of Benedict Arnold as traitors and 'loyalists'. They are frequently painted as 'unpatriotic' when in fact they were anything but. They put country after God where it belonged, and that also meant putting self aside to obey, but they clearly saw the heartache that would attend rejecting God's chosen authority figures, and sought the good of their fellows in preaching about it.

They preached a simple message – “rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft” and the move to declare independence was rebellion against a very simple, very direct command from God

*“Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. **Honour the king.**” (1Pe 2:17)*

Yes, honor the king. That even means crazy King George. That means in our context crazy Joe Biden, Tyrant Trump, or whoever is in power and has the authority over us. That never means you bow to them over God, it never means you don't call out their sins or refuse to take part in their idolatry when it happens. It does mean you obey. You give honor to the position because the person in it has been placed there by God, that all His ways might be accomplished and to obey is to defer to God's judgement, not reject it. That is what Saul rejected. He thought it better to not let all those best sheep and goats go to waste and it was better to sacrifice them, rejecting that they were all God's anyway, and he had commanded their destruction.

Amazingly, many loyalist preachers were Anglicans, but their sermons weren't full of political rationales for rejecting rebellion. It wasn't about their love for George or the benefits of English citizenship. It wasn't even about an affinity for the Church of England or some fear of losing connection to it. Where this matter was concerned, Anglican preachers like John Boucher got it right. They couldn't see how their very church was an affront to God being founded to endorse adultery, but they saw this clearly. Not all loyalists were Anglicans, mind you, but some of the most vocal, like Boucher, were. And I have to say, the experience was not much different than our own. Boucher wrote in one of his sermons just before the Revolutionary War that

“...where loyalist ministers are concerned, offence is taken, not so much because some of us preach on politics, as because we preach what are called unpopular

politics. Preachers who are less anxious to speak right, than smooth things are numerous among us.”

And in another sermon

“a worldly temporizing spirit is now again unhappily gone forth in great force among the people of the Colonies, not sparing even the Sanctuary...There are many, whose sole aim is to reconcile their religion with their worldly interest, even among those who serve at the altar.”

The preachers of colonial America were just as selfish and Godless as preachers of 2021 America. From her beginnings this nation was awash in idolatry, greed and selfishness, not Christianity. You can see it clearly when you consider how few preachers there were declaring the hypocrisy of “liberty and justice for all” when so many black men and women lived in chains around them. The pulpits of 1776 should have been ringing with rejection of this “Declaration of Independence”, calling it rightly what it was – a rejection of God, but they largely weren’t, unfortunately.

Not unlike today, words were sharp and regularly used weapons. “Loyalist” became an epithet spat out at people as they walked down the street, when the reality of their position – in many cases – had nothing to do with any sort of attached loyalty to King George or England; many of them had no love for the King and the way he seemed to arbitrarily make rules regarding taxes and rights specifically intended to harm the colonists. They at least presented, however, to seek to serve God in at least this matter, and to obey. Preachers like Boucher didn’t defend the tyranny of George, but they preached a message of humble pleading, remembering who put George on the throne.

As a funny aside, Ben told me recently that someone sent an email to the website saying that our analysis of Romans 13 can’t be right, otherwise the American Revolution would have been a sin. Well, in case this hasn’t been clear, Mr. Emailer, the American Revolution was a sin. Just like Pharaoh’s killing the Hebrew children was a sin. The outcomes and ordering of God’s providence don’t let sinners off the hook. Get over it.

A little more about liberty

The liberty trumpeted about at the birth of this nation had nothing to do with the liberty dealt with by George Mason and John Leland during the ratification debate. If you don’t know who John Leland is, I strongly recommend reading about him. In short, he was a Baptist preacher born in 1754 who was instrumental in getting Madison to build the Bill of Rights, and he was specifically key to the First Amendment and the religious establishment clause. George Mason was another crucial player in fighting against state religion in Virginia. These are vast oversimplifications of their stories and I encourage you to read about their lives, it really is interesting stuff.

Leland came into the fray during Constitutional ratification primarily because Jefferson, Franklin and the rest had no interest in preserving what is widely called “liberty of conscience”, i.e., the right to worship without dictate from a State Church or under threat of government sanction for how you worship. While Jefferson didn’t want to be **forced** to worship, he had sat by for years watching religious persecution happen right under his nose and done little to nothing about it. He and the other founders could have included these rights directly in the original Constitution, and John Leland would not have had to basically hold Virginia’s ratification vote hostage with the powerful voting bloc he held sway over if they had simply cared enough to do so.

John Adams, one of the delegates from Massachusetts to the Constitutional Congress, was confronted with this very idea of religious liberty being absent in early American government as early as 1774, while he is busy writing about English deprivation of liberty! A group of Baptists and Quakers tried to get Adams to address the hypocrisy in how they were taxed without representation and prevented by the state-based Congregationalist religion in Connecticut from pursuing happiness by their worship of God, and Adams said “...we might as well expect a change in the solar system, as to expect Massachusetts to give up its ecclesiastical establishment.” Robert Treat Paine (another delegate) contended “...there was nothing of conscience in the matter; it was only a contending about paying a little money.” As if the issue was only a matter of taxes being forcibly taken to pay for building Congregationalist churches and pay the salaries of Congregationalist preachers and not outright persecution of Baptists, Quakers and others at the hand of the state-sponsored Congregationalist mob. The hypocrisy in the matter was astounding.

To put it bluntly, these “founding fathers” didn’t give one hoot about liberty as it impacted everyday people, and they sure didn’t have a care for what true liberty is according to Scripture. These colonial aristocrats only cared about the liberty of their pocketbooks and how British taxation impacted their wealth. It wasn’t until Leland, Mason and others got right up in their grills about *religious* liberty that anything was set in motion to address the issue, the result of which was the religious freedom clause of the First Amendment.

Now, I’m a big proponent of the First Amendment, but let’s be perfectly clear and perfectly honest with ourselves – we don’t need no stinking First Amendment. It has been put in place by the providence of our God to provide some measure of restraint against the mob of modern America, but it is no thing we are dependent upon to fulfill our duty to

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” (Isa 58:1)

It is a nice tool to have, but not anything we are dependent upon or should hold some undue affection toward. While it is well framed to protect against state-based religion, there were plenty of religions being practiced in the colonies before the revolution, and there were plenty after. Don't get me wrong, the Lord provided this tool, and we use it gratefully, but don't get all wrapped up in it like it's some wonderful blanket the revolution produced – it isn't, and if it were repealed, we'd keep going.

More important than his First Amendment work, however, Leland stands as a representative for the idea that revolution isn't necessary, and it is indeed improper regardless of how a government is treating you. In the early days of this country, after all their supposed fight for "liberty" and the "pursuit of happiness", John Leland was on the front line of what it looks like when a mob rules a nation. In Virginia, Baptist ministers and their congregations were in dire straits in the late 1700s. The ministers were being thrown into prison, their services physically disrupted by unruly mobs breaking into homes and buildings where the services were being held, and they were accosted on the street frequently with violence – all because they wanted no part of the Anglican church. In Massachusetts and Connecticut, the preachers were having property confiscated to pay taxes that went toward paying for Congregationalist churches, and losing all they had. Liberty and freedom were more than a little sparse if you didn't toe the state religion lines.

In the face of that, Leland didn't raise a militia. He didn't incite revolt against a tyrannical and unjust government that was silent on these matters and did nothing to put a stop to the violence conducted especially against the Baptists. It didn't infringe on **their** liberty, so there was no reason to get involved.

No, Leland did not follow the example shown by Jefferson despite being personally close to him. He did not make excuses about why he shouldn't submit to the government. Instead, he spoke. He petitioned and pleaded with the consciences of those in power to do something about what was going on. He didn't talk about liberty in an abstract sense and mis-apply scripture. He said words that were appropriate and needed to be said, and he persuaded people to do the right thing. He respected the rulers over him. I'm not saying John Leland was anything other than a man. Don't worship him, don't call him a hero. He was a vessel accomplishing a necessary task along God's timeline. Nothing more.

We are the same. Accomplishing a public ministry at another place in God's timeline, dealing with the aftermath of the ongoing American Rebellion. The brutes these mobs "elect" are still appointed by God – don't forget that. This idea of democracy is a theatrical farce being played out by these people regularly – it is still our God in charge of and directing even the tiniest elements of every moving part of the universe. He appoints the leaders that are necessary to His providence and plan, just as He always has. Every president, representative, senator, etc. from the beginning of this nation,

though it is founded in rebellion, has been part of God's providence. But we deal with it. We don't rebel, we preach. We admonish, we exhort, we persuade where we can in the name of God. We conduct ourselves according to scripture as best as we are able, walking in the light we have today.

On this day, when all around us promote a false liberty, where not all are equal and free as the founding documents claim they should be, let us consider the only real liberty that exists and that we should have any focus on –

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” (Gal 5:1)

Christ Jesus has by His grace freed us, giving us liberty from the bondage of sin. He has paid the debt required for the sins of His elect, and that provides a great freedom of conscience, freedom of mind from despair and distress knowing we could never possibly pay the price required.

He has not provided a freedom to sin as all the false preachers around us would have you believe, but a freedom from the inevitable and righteous and just result of sin.

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom 6:23)

Consider this freedom, that we are not under the bondage of the law, carrying the yoke of works through rites and ceremonies, sacrifice and strictures.

We are not restricted in our ability to approach the mercy seat, but are able to come unto Him freely, without restraint, asking anything and petitioning Him through constant prayer.

These freedoms require us to stand fast in them, defending the truth of the Gospel and walking in obedience. Though we be surrounded by rebellion, we must stand fast in the ways of God. To do otherwise would be to reject God, and that will result in His rejecting us.

The days are dark, and the smell of death is thick all around us. We must exercise this liberty to call upon our God for reprieve from the vexations of this generation and for peace, knowing that all things that must come to pass will come to pass, and we will ultimately enjoy the freedom and liberty from the bondage of the flesh, for Paul reminds us

“Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” (Rom 8:21)

That liberty is what we hope to gain entrance to ultimately. Let that be our focus and let us gain that prize through patient obedience and submitting to the longsuffering of God.