

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: WHEN THE WICKED RULE

Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 95:2

And now, verily I say unto you, concerning the laws of the land, It is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them, and that law of the land, which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom, in maintaining rights and privileges belongs to all mankind and is justifiable before me; therefore I, the Lord, justifieth you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land; and as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than these, cometh of evil. I, the Lord God, maketh you free; therefore ye are free indeed: and the law also maketh you free; nevertheless when the wicked rule the people mourn; wherefore honest men and wise men should be sought for, diligently, and good and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these, cometh of evil.

When the wicked rule, the people mourn; wherefore honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently; and good and wise men ye should observe to uphold.

"The church should never engage in politics." How many times have you heard that sort of statement -- usually coming either from some shady politician who does not wish to have his political prerogatives disturbed, or from some ungodly person who resents the church's intrusion by political means into what he considers his right to sin as he pleases.

There is perhaps room for debate on the question of whether the church as an organization should enter into politics. The church is composed of human beings. It is therefore subject to all the temptations that individuals are subject to -- the lust for power, money, prestige and preferment. The church which discovers that it can wield a political power is tempted, as individuals are tempted, to use that power in selfish, immoral, and ungodly ways, and because it is an organization of many individuals, it is many times more powerful than any one individual. The aphorism of Lord Acton applies to the church as well as to the individual: "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Therefore there needs to be democratic controls in the church as well as in the state. But with such democratic controls, and a proper Christ-like motivation, there would seem to be no good reason why the church should not be interested in politics. Certainly the good Christian will be interested in politics, and if the in-

dividual church members are, then the church as a whole will be.

Freedom is basically a religious and moral, not a political issue; and the church and its members are rightfully concerned with religious and moral issues. The winning, and protecting and cherishing of man's basic freedoms and liberties is therefore a proper province of the church and of the church member.

Where does our freedom come from? The Declaration of Independence states a great moral and spiritual truth when it says: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Our freedom comes from God. It is his unalienable gift. No man gives this gift to another; no man takes it away from another. One man may take away from another his enjoyment of God's gift of freedom; or he may restore the enjoyment of that gift once it has been taken away; but the gift remains as man's inalienable right, God-given and indestructible.

All the freedom we have has a moral and religious basis in the gift of Christ. When man fell, he lost his freedom. He became subject to Satan, subject to death. Nothing that man could do, no choice that

he could make, no labor that he could perform, could make any difference, or restore him to life. This was a destruction of agency -- a denial of God's gift of the right to choose. Choice has no significance unless there are at least two alternatives from which to choose. If death was the inevitable end, no matter what choice men made, then there was no choice, and man's freedom was gone; he was in bondage to sin, to death, and to Satan.

God purchased man's freedom by the gift of his Son, who by his death and resurrection redeemed man from sin and death, and restored the possibility or alternative of life, on condition of right choice. With a choice possible between life and death, man was again free to choose, and Satan's plan of destroying man's freedom both now and in eternity was brought to nought. God and his Son, Jesus Christ, have thus purchased man's freedom. This is the most basic, the most important single tenet of Christianity that I know -- that because men are redeemed from the fall, they have become free forever -- free to choose liberty and eternal life, or captivity and death, because of the redemption made for them by Jesus Christ. When any man destroys, denies, or curtails the freedom of another, he is denying the mercies of Christ who died that all men might be free, and taking his stand with Satan whose methods have always been the methods of compulsion, slavery, bondage, and death. We repeat: freedom is basically a religious and moral concept. The church and the Christian must be interested in politics, or they are immoral and un-Christian.

This brings us to the consideration of another truth. We have said that God makes us free. Our scripture reading says: "The law also maketh you free." The right of freedom, the gift of freedom comes from God. But that principle needs implementation in law, and the protection of government. Man's freedoms are never safe unless there is constitutional law to define those freedoms and to spell out the duties, responsibilities of those who make, administer, and adjudicate the law. That is why this church has been told in modern revelation that we should befriend and support the constitutional law of the land in which we live, and that whatsoever is more or less than this is evil. Any other laws that are made must be in agreement with the basic constitutional law which defines and guarantees man's freedoms.

Freedom is not secure, however, if it relies only on constitutional law.

There are always a few men who ignore and defy law, whether it be the law of God or of man. There is always a minority which is willing and sometimes eager to destroy the rights, privileges, and freedoms of other men, to deprive them of liberty, of property, and even of life. If freedom is to be safe, we need a government to implement, administer, and adjudicate constitutional law. A constitution is only as good as the citizens and the government which uphold it.

"Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Even under a perfect system of constitutional law, and a perfectly organized government, men's freedoms may be lost, or destroyed by men who are either wicked and ruthless, cruel and selfish when they take office, or who become so as they are corrupted by the power of that office. The power of office enlarges opportunity. It enlarges the opportunity of the wicked man to steal, to oppress, and to enslave. It enlarges the opportunity of the godly and righteous man to serve in love and righteousness and Christian dedication.

"When the wicked rule, the people mourn; wherefore honest men and wise men ye should observe to uphold...." The individual citizen, the Christian, the church member -- yes, and the church as an organization is obligated to seek diligently for honest men and wise men to administer the law. It is not enough that a man simply be honest. He may be honest, and still be a fool, or a political babe in the woods. He needs also to be wise. It is not enough that a man simply be clever or shrewd, or that he knows his way around. He also needs to be truly wise, with a wisdom that comes of basic honesty and integrity. Good, honest, wise men should be sought for. They should be supported by the vote of church members. They should be supported with the prayers, with the taxes, with the military service, with the jury service, with the informed and militant public opinion which every citizen owes to the state which guarantees and protects his freedoms.

Because freedom is God's gift; because it has a moral and spiritual and religious foundation; because freedom is also the business of law and government, it is the duty of every Christian and of Christians collectively to be concerned about law and government -- to support constitutional and statutory law -- to seek for and support honest and wise men to administer the law. Only thus can the freedoms won for us by our ancestors and written into our Constitution be preserved for ourselves and our posterity.