

# Human Freedom and Christian Responsibility

Pastor Edward D. Seely, Ph.D.

1. Everyone wants to be free.
  - a. We see this in conversation, in literature, in pop music, and in the official national anthems around the world.
  - b. We sing of “the land of the free and the home of the brave;” France of “freedom, beloved freedom;” Germany of “unity and law and freedom;” Australians urge themselves to “rejoice, for we are all young and free;” and China’s begins with a call to “Arise, ye who refuse to be slaves!”
2. That universal desire for freedom comes from bearing God’s image in which he created us.
  - When the Bible reveals that God has created us in his image (Genesis 1:26-28), part of what that concept means is that God has built into us in microcosm some of his characteristics that he has in macrocosm. For example, as he is love, he has given us the capacity for love, and as he is relational in his very being and with others, he has given us the capacity for having and developing relationships. One of God’s characteristics, that he has in macrocosm and which he has given us in microcosm, is freedom. While he is free to do whatever pleases him, we also have a genuine freedom, albeit within limits.
3. The main problem we have is the corruption of human nature that resulted from Adam and Eve’s sin, their misuse of their freedom when they disobeyed God. Their rebellion against God by giving in to the temptation of Satan has had devastating effects throughout the cosmos.
4. This corruption restricts and redirects our freedom.
  - a. Our sinfulness restricts our freedom through an inherent inclination to choose what is not good.
    - 1) Sin and the four-fold disharmony it causes (between man and God, between man and man, within oneself, and throughout all creation [“all creation groans” {Romans 8:22 NRSV}]) naturally leads to division and ultimately chaos.
      - Chuck Colson, President Nixon’s self-described “hatchet man,” who went to prison for his role in Watergate, was there converted to Christ, and founded the excellent parachurch ministry, Prison Fellowship. Repeatedly he said, “If the Gospel of Christ is not proclaimed throughout this land, and law replaces grace, we’ll end up with needing a soldier with a bayonet on every street corner in order to have any security.”
    - 2) This disharmony and its cosmic effects of sin and evil will be destroyed when Christ returns, and only when he returns, and completes God’s plan of salvation culminating in the new heaven and new earth. (Revelation 21-22)
      - Though we are called to do all we can to improve the present conditions throughout the world, such as by better education, corrections in government, more wholesome entertainment, and bringing evil doers to justice, the

destruction of evil and the righting of all wrongs will only occur when Jesus returns and the final judgment occurs. (Matthew 25:31-46)

3) Christ is the Lord over all, everything has been subjected to him. The second person of the Trinity, as Paul wrote to the Colossians, “is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:17) Only Christ can control the chaos until he vanquishes and extinguishes it completely when he returns...and he is returning!

4) Recall what the apostle Paul also wrote in his letter to the Romans:

<sup>5</sup> Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

<sup>6</sup> The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;

<sup>7</sup> the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

<sup>8</sup> Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup> You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

<sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

<sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.

<sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

<sup>14</sup> because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (Romans 8:5-14)

• **Truly, our proclamation of the Gospel of Christ is the only hope of our country.**

b. So our human sinfulness restricts our freedom, but it also redirects our freedom (Romans 7:15—“I do the very thing I hate.”) Our sinfulness causes us to disobey God’s Word and will—even to the point of doing what is counterproductive to our own and others’ (including our nation’s) well-being. Sin has extensive ripple effects.

5. This Biblical reality has profound and extensive implications and applications, including the concern of the cultural changes in our nation and what we can do about it—indeed, involving our only hope and our identity in Christ and our calling from God.

a. The first implication is to explain to others what God has shown us who have “eyes to see and ears to hear.”

1) Explain what we’ve just been observing as to what human nature is truly like.

2) We also need to explain the Biblical revelation of what is going on in this world, that most of the world cannot see.

- Specifically, inform others of the invisible, but very real, spiritual war that is the context of what is going on.
  - As Biblical scholars point out, in the Book of Revelation, which was written to encourage Christians suffering under the vicious Roman Emperor Domitian, in about 95 A.D., there is a significant turning point at Chapter 12. The first 11 chapters of the Book of Revelation portray the evils the world was, and still is, experiencing.
  - THEN, starting in Chapter 12 and going through Chapter 20, the Holy Spirit reveals to John what is behind all these evils, disclosing the cosmic warfare between Satan and his demonic followers and God. Good News: God and Satan are not peers—Satan is a little peanut contrasted with God, but he can still cause a lot of pain. He has been vanquished by Christ, but we still have a lot of fighting to do. The war is over, but there are still mopping up battles to win. How?
- b. Challenge unrealistic anthropologies, i.e., views of man.
- 1) Nonbiblical views of human nature are unrealistic, because their premise is that human nature is essentially good. This is the viewpoint of secular philosophies and other religions. For example, it is the view of
    - a) secular humanism, the philosophical basis of public education. See, e.g., the Humanist Manifesto II.
    - b) It is also the view of other religions, such as Islam, which does not believe in sin. Islam teaches that human beings make mistakes, and the way to improve society is to teach people right and wrong.
      - 1- Islam repeats Socrates’ unrealistic concept that to know the good is to do the good, and Islam knows, but doesn’t admit, that premise doesn’t work.
      - 2- So Islam’s system for controlling the wrongdoing of humans is to impose Sharia Law, which drastically limits human freedom, and even reduces many, including females, to serfdom. Non-Muslims are subjected to even worse treatment. Consider also the “No-Go Zones” that Muslims are establishing, even in this country, when their population in a given area is over 50%.
  - 2) One effective way to challenge the unrealistic anthropologies is to raise questions, e.g., if mankind is essentially good,
    - a) why do doors have locks?
    - b) why is there identity theft?
    - c) why all these mass murders?
    - d) why do roofers require such a large down payment?
    - e) And you could ask countless other questions.
- c. We need to use opportunities God gives us to explain the above and why nonbiblical philosophies fail.
- 1) Explain these realities in conversations with others.
    - I hope you talked about religion and politics with your family and friends in your Independence Day get-togethers; if you didn’t, be sure to do so in your Labor Day and other times together. Two very misguided and misleading ideas we’ve heard from childhood, that there are two things you should never talk about in polite company, religion and politics, we have to correct that

misunderstanding. It's clear in the Bible that we are to do both, but as the apostle Paul disclosed, we are to "speak the truth in love." (I.e., being patient, kind, not jealous or boastful...) We can do that! And we do do that!

- In Chapter 13 of the Book of Revelation, two beasts emerge in league with Satan. One is the beast from the sea symbolizing false government, and the other is the beast coming out of the earth, representing, Guess What? Yes. You guessed it: false religion.
- 2) We are called by God to explain these realities whenever we have the opportunity in whatever domain God leads us to serve him, e.g.,
    - a) in parenting children
    - b) as a grandparent
    - c) as a teacher in the classroom
    - d) as a business or professional person
    - e) in political office—if God gives you this vocation (> L. *vocare*, to call)
    - f) as a pastor
    - g) in any kind of leadership
    - h) in opportunities that occur in the media, e.g., letters to the editor of the local newspaper and/or the anonymous phone-in line, and
    - i) in social media posts.
  - d. Use these opportunities as means of fulfilling our calling to be Christ's witnesses.
    - 1) It is not enough to point out how other philosophies, religions, and programs fail; it is respectable to supply a better alternative, and we in Christ have one!
    - 2) Emphasize the realistic message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ:
      - a) Human nature is essentially sinful and corrupt.
      - b) Our only hope comes in changing that nature.
      - c) Our nature can only be changed by the Holy Spirit, which in historic Christian theology is called regeneration, or being born again. (John 3:3-6)
        - 1] This new birth places one in the kingdom of God, a Biblical concept involving the rule of God in human beings.
        - 2] Herein is true freedom, freedom from the bondage to sin, which freedom enables one to be completely free even to the extent of being able to deny ones' desires for the sake of God and for the sake of other human beings. (John 8:34-36; 1 Corinthians 8-10)
          - "Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'" (John 8:34-36)
          - Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible." (1 Corinthians 9:19)
        - 3] Notice how the true freedom is a giant step above the loud contemporary and ubiquitous insistence on rights by those who are unregenerated and immature in society. Contrast what Paul told the Corinthians. After citing all the reasons for his and Barnabas' right as apostles to be paid for their expenses of preaching the Gospel of Christ Jesus, Paul said, "But we did

not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 9:12)

- Let’s ask people, who are focused on their rights (and usually not the rights of others, especially the rights of others who oppose them), this question: “Would you like even more freedom?”
- d) Yet that change of human nature, regeneration, the new birth, is just the first step, the essential basis for the lasting change which we need: maturity in Christ-likeness, which in historic Christian theology is called sanctification, the root meaning of the word meaning to be holy, and involves a life-long process whereby we grow in holiness to God. This maturity comes in conformity to God’s Word and will. (Ephesians 4:11-16)
- This sanctification process consists of the nurture of God’s kingdom.
- 3) The only realistic hope for ourselves, our society, our nation, and every other nation is the extension and nurture of God’s kingdom in and through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- a) The ***extension*** of God’s kingdom consists of helping more and more people find the new nature, the new birth, in Jesus Christ, through the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ, for example in the ways mentioned above.
- b) The ***nurture*** of God’s kingdom consists of helping people mature in Christ Jesus, by teaching God’s Word and its implications and applications for daily life.
- e. These Biblical truths about human nature are only a few of the examples of how our historic Christian theology is so very practical. For example, these texts from God’s Word suggest that the idea we can solve our problems with enemies who want to destroy our country only by reasoning with them is not likely to be productive. Such an idea ignores the reality of the depravity of the unregenerated human nature, which is not only clearly explained in the Bible, but is everywhere on display, especially, “for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.” Our ultimate loss of freedom, humanly speaking, will come with the extension of the influence of those with an unbiblical anthropology that reduces our military preparedness to defend ourselves against the aggression of foreign nations.
- f. Chuck Colson, President Nixon’s self-described “hatchet man,” who went to prison for his role in Watergate, was there converted to Christ, and founded the excellent parachurch ministry, Prison Fellowship. Repeatedly he said, “If the Gospel of Christ is not proclaimed throughout this land, and law replaces grace, we’ll end up with needing a soldier with a bayonet on every street corner in order to have any security.”
- g. Here the church of Jesus Christ can uniquely offer to all people and nations the only true and lasting hope for all they long to observe and experience.
- 1) But to do so, we must remember our identity, our relationship with Jesus Christ.
  - 2) We must remember the call he has given us to be his witnesses and to speak up when we have the opportunity.
  - 3) Abraham Kuiper was one of the most outstanding Dutch theologians in the latter 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and he also was a leader in the Dutch government. Beginning in 1874, Kuyper served regularly in one or the other of the two houses of the Netherlands’ legislature, and from 1901, a year after publishing his exhaustive and classic text, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, until 1905, he served as

Prime Minister for the Netherlands. It was in his inaugural address at the dedication of the Free University in Amsterdam that he made his famous and often quoted statement, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”<sup>1</sup>

- 4) Be prepared for criticism and some nasty opposition, and even persecution as the apostles Peter and Paul say will be forthcoming when we speak out. (1 Peter 4:12-19; 2 Timothy 3:10-17, esp. 12-14)
  - **But here’s the key to victory:** Remember what Peter said, “...Rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the spirit of glory and of God rests on you.” (1 Peter 4:13-14)
  - a) I’ve experienced it; God more than sufficiently supplies what we need to get through the illogical ad hominem name-calling and anything else they throw at us.
  - b) As God’s Word says throughout, “**Do not be afraid.**” “**Do not be afraid.**” (E.g., Genesis 15:1; 46:3; 50:21; Jeremiah 1:8; Zechariah 8:13; Matthew 10:26, 28; 14:27; 28:5, 10; Acts 18:9; 27:24; Revelation 2:10)
    - *One reality that helps me speak up when I know I’ll face opposition and worse is to remember this question: Whose opinion counts more to me? God’s opinion? Or these people’s mistaken opinions? The answer and my next step is clear.*
  - c) God did not call us to be silent.
    - 1- What is our Christian responsibility? By all means vote, bringing the mind of Christ to the vital issues our society is facing.
    - 2- I’ve been asked for guidelines to use in voting wisely as a Christian. Here are some:
      - a- As John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court stated, “Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation, to select and prefer Christians for their rulers.”
        - While that is the first principle to consider, it is important to keep in mind that an axiom in political science states that a prerequisite for a democracy is an enlightened electorate. The nation at its founding had such an electorate. Education in the schools included the Bible and was based on the Bible, as were the laws from the time of the colonies. Those who didn’t go to school were taught the Bible in their homes. Due to unwise decisions even in the Supreme Court in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we increasingly lack an enlightened electorate, including many of the

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<sup>1</sup> Abraham Kuiper, quote from his inaugural address at the dedication of the Free University in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Eerdmans, 1998), 488)  
<https://thechristianscholar.wordpress.com/2014/07/20/lets-read-keller-8-abraham-kuyper-did-not-say-there-is-not-a-square-inch-in-the-whole-domain-of-my-personal-devotions-and-churchgoing-over-which-christ-does-not-cry-mine/>  
(Accessed 7/6/16)

candidates from among whom the electorate has to choose in their voting.

- b- Therefore, we need to look at other qualifications as well, for example:
- 1] If they claim to be a Christian, is there evidence that they are what they claim to be? If so, how maturely do they function?
  - 2] Consider carefully the character of the candidates, e.g., do they have a track record of telling the truth, or do they lie?
  - 3] What else in their track record indicates how they will likely function in office? Have they held any office before? Have they ever run a business? Do they know Economics 101 and how to produce sustainable jobs?
  - 4] If two candidates present themselves for public office, one who claims to be a Christian, but doesn't function according to God's Word, and another who is not a Christian but who holds to a high moral standard and whose values come closer to those that please God and who will likely function in ways that will make the nation flourish (remember it is God's nation, as is the rest of the world), then you may need to vote for the non-Christian in this election. As Jesus said, sometimes the "children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." (Luke 16:8 KJV) Vote for the person who will do best for the nation in God's sight.
- c- Guidelines for the proposals:
- 1] Is the proposal consistent with God's Word? If not, you know how to vote.
  - 2] Does the proposal advocate for or facilitate immoral or any other practice that is counterproductive to the state or nation that belongs to God?
  - 3] Is the proposal fiscally responsible? How will it be paid for?
  - 4] Would it be wise to have this proposal made into a law of the land? What would be the outcome(s) of this policy becoming law?
- 3- Though he was not a Christian but still blessed in many ways by God, Elie Wiesel, a survivor of egregious tormentation in the Jewish Holocaust, spoke well when accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986 saying, "Whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation, take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."<sup>2</sup>
- 4- Also remember that God has called us, and with his Holy Spirit indeed empowers us, to do so much more: proclaim and explain, preach (the original meaning of this word is the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ by believers to unbelievers) and teach God's Word.
- For much practical help to do so, see Jim Found's Web site: [www.foundbytes.com](http://www.foundbytes.com). Start with his new and excellent series of brief video clips in which he carefully explains how to witness effectively in normal conversations. **"Do not be afraid!"**

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<sup>2</sup> Verena Dobnik, "Elie Wiesel, author and Holocaust survivor dead at 87," Associated Press, *Reporter-Herald*, July 3, 2016, p. 4C.

- See also the Christian Witness page of my Web site at [www.fromacorntoak12.com](http://www.fromacorntoak12.com). **“Do not be afraid!”**
- 5- “As you go through life, try to be that person whose actions teach others how to be better people and better citizens,”<sup>3</sup> SCOTUS Justice Clarence Thomas told Hillsdale College graduates in May 2016. As we Christians “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15), we’ll be doing just that. **“Do not be afraid!”**

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<sup>3</sup> <http://dailysignal.com/2016/07/01/25-years-later-clarence-thomas-transformed-supreme-court/> (Accessed 7/2/16)  
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