Looking at Voting Issues Through Biblical Glasses

The Unalienable Right to Liberty

Decades ago, the academic world began in earnest to apply the psychology of self to the classroom. Rules, guidelines, and measurable outcomes were out; subjectively defined “truth” and independence were in. Absolutes were restrictive, while individual realities and free-thought were all the rage. This was the era of peace at any cost, boundary-free sex, “mind-expanding” drugs, and do-your-own-thing lifestyles. Tools for indoctrination were various pseudo-morality exercises that permeated America’s classrooms, from grade schools to universities.

A. The rise of situation ethics

I remember one such exercise called The Lifeboat Game. This assignment had several components: excess population, limited resources, manufactured demographic combinations, and a contrived crisis. The “game” forced the player to “remove” (read - kill off) a prescribed number of people based on their socio-economic value, their excessive draw on the community, and the overall need for communal survival. In effect, the needs of the whole were considered greater than the needs of the few.

The solution? Kill off the unnecessary or unproductive. I remember being given this assignment in a college sociology class. We were told that there were 10 shipwrecked survivors in a lifeboat with only enough food for 8 to last 30 days. We were given the character list, split up into small groups, and told to identify the 2 that would be “sacrificed” for the good of the group.

There was an aged priest, a gay-doctor, an invalid child, two or three healthy ladies with various talents, 2-3 healthy men with assorted abilities, and one or two lesser survivors. One look at the character list and the objective of the designers was obvious; kill off the old priest (he’d probably offer himself anyway), and the invalid child (high level of care for no real community value).

As my group began to discuss the options, I sat pondering my response. After a few minutes, I spoke up, “I am not willing to kill any of them. There has to be a way to keep them all alive.” To my great surprise, the rest agreed. So, rather than figuring out who to kill, our time was spent determining how the food and water could be split amongst the group. The solution? Option 1: Each person would fast one out of every 5 days; or Option 2: each person gets 80% rations for the full 30 days.

Well, as you might imagine, our plan to “think outside the box” was deemed unacceptable. The teacher challenged me in front of the class; but since our solution met the required criteria “find a solution that was in the best interest of the greater good,” we still passed the project. Interestingly enough, as I read our results before the class, many responded, “I didn’t know we could do that!”

B. The redefinition of “Liberty”

You see, there are millions in our world today who know that absolute standards exist, and want to live by those established principles. God gave them the liberty to live in such a way, and our nation has historically protected that liberty.

But the voices for compromise in society, and the sinfulness of the human heart frequently choke off this embattled (and often undernourished) conviction in our lives. In time, our Biblical foundations and the willingness to stand for them, gives in to the draw of autonomy, the desire for absolute independence. As I mentioned a couple weeks back, this is the same basic temptation that Satan capitalized on in the Garden of Eden millennia ago (i.e. you will be like God).

As we discussed, there is a chasm between the world’s understanding of liberty and that which is found in the heart of God. To Satan, the world, and our flesh, liberty is best described as license (blanket permission, the complete lack of outside restraint). “I can live as I please, love as I please, die as I please.” Ideal liberation, as portrayed by the world, is like a wild horse, running freely in the open prairies; a romantic option, but one that is filled with countless dangers and no source of care.

To God, however, liberty is understood to be a release from spiritual and personal captivity. Jesus came to replace bondage with liberation, absolutely; but a liberation for service. It’s a release into a life of protected openness; expansive opportunities with borders that reduce self-injury while also protecting from outside attack.

A God-defined liberation is more accurately portrayed by the horse experiencing wonderful seasons of freedom from the constraints of bridle and harness, enjoying the expanses of a broad, fenced pasture. Oh, the horse may sometimes stand at the fence, pondering what might be on the other side. But the provision, care, and protection of this environment is truly in the best interest of the horse, and he soon comes to delight in times of work and rest alike. This is true liberty in Christ Jesus.

Is 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; 2 Cor 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, (there) is liberty.

The problem with the worldly theory of liberty, is that the horse is not necessarily the best judge of what is best for himself, nor the herd. What seems good at the moment, isn’t always good over time.

I am told that a common problem among cattle ranchers is early-spring grazing. The cattle are so glad to be out in the lush, green pastures; that they gorge themselves; I’ve seen this first-hand. Their systems aren’t used to the rich, nourishment-laden grass after a winter of hay. Gas builds up in their bellies, and ranchers sometimes have to puncture their stomachs to release the pressure (you can’t tell me that doesn’t hurt). Likewise, people often gorge
themselves on pleasures, when outside restraints are removed; and the remedy for that over-indulgence can be equally painful.

**Prov 14:12** There is a way (which seems) right to a man, But its end is the way of death. (echoed in 16:25)

C. **Situation ethics gone south**

In fact, today in modern PC America, we have taken this longing for autonomy, regardless of the personal or corporate cost; and made it a mandate of society. Instead of the LifeBoat ideology “The needs of the whole are greater than the needs of the few,” now the prevailing politically correct mindset is, “The desires of the few outweigh the needs (or wishes) of the whole."

You can still decide who has to be kicked out of the “life-boat,” but now fewer people make the decision. The consideration is no longer the good of the general population; we now only need concern ourselves with the desires of the compliant, the cooperative, the supportive. Any boat-rockers are quickly and mercilessly tossed overboard. We have moved from the devaluation of life and liberty for some, to the removal of both from many. Not that dissimilar from Jesus’ day.

**Luke 13:34** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!

**Acts 7:52** "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become;

**1 Thess 2:15** who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men,

D. **A matter of fairness?**

**Lev 19:15** You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.

God is the embodiment of justice. He expects His people to be the physical expression of this righteousness to the world. But there is a vast difference between godly justice, and human fairness.

Justice is the ability to determine an accurate verdict, based on a clearly defined set of absolute principles. As Webster’s Dictionary states, “To be Just implies adherence to a standard of rightness or lawfulness without reference to one’s own inclinations.”

Fairness is a “treating of both or all sides alike, without reference to one’s own feelings or interests.” In other words, fairness isn’t concerned with absolute standards of measurement; fairness, like water, only wants to find a common level. Therefore any standard, regardless of how destructive, can be okay, as long as it is applied to all concerned. As the rude and insensitive Mr. Higgins states in My Fair Lady, “You see, the great secret, Eliza, is not a question of good manners or bad manners, or any particular sort of manners, but having the same manner for all human souls. The question is not whether I treat you rudely, but whether you’ve ever heard me treat anyone else better.” Neither good nor bad matter; as long as all is even.

With this as our foundational value, the inevitable litmus test for any and all perspectives will be “Is it fair?” In fact, this is the only absolute claimed by those advancing alternative definitions of morality or gender identity. “This behavior (or lifestyle) must be allowed. It’s a RIGHT. It’s only fair!” But is fairness really the issue? Is fairness a reasonable basis for changing our established spiritual and social principles or institutions? Does fairness trump justice? Does a subjective “fairness” over-ride our historical and Biblically grounded sense of Liberty?

Scripture clearly states the result of this mock-justice. For in the absence of a basis for law, fairness leaves us with the lowest common denominator.

**Judg 21:25** In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

That is where our nation is headed if a just standard of righteousness, of Biblical absolutes, is not allowed. This is the outcome of a culture where Godly principles are banished, and religious liberty is restrained.

E. **Fingers point in many directions**

As Christians, it’s easy to point at “godless liberals”; “atheists”; or the “young revolutionaries” as the cause of our social decay. It’s reasonable to direct attention to the forces who have historically advanced various anti-Judeo-Christian philosophies: the ACLU, NARAL (National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League), GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), evolutionary scientists, unethical politicians, and a host of revisionist judges.

But where do you and I fit on that list? When was the last time you challenged someone who was promoting an ungodly idea? Have you ever actually spoken up, confronting some immoral or ill-devised program; facing the possibility of rebuttal or rebuke? Or has it been too unnerving to step out, or too easy to rationalize as “someone else’s job?”

**James 4:17** Therefore, to one who knows {the} right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

**James 1:25** But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the {law} of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Edmund Burke, Irish orator, philosopher, & politician (1729 - 1797), once observed, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” Nearly 500 years ago, Martin Luther stood against a church which had centralized all religious liberty for itself; leaving neither God’s Word nor even salvation itself uncontrolled. But today, we face a culture where religious freedom isn’t be taken, we’re gladly giving it away, convinced that it’s the “fair” thing to do.