



Fight for Rights by Wayne Burger

*All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.*

The city officials of Philippi beat Paul and Silas and threw them in prison and then the next morning sent policemen to set them free. Paul said,

“They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out” (**Acts 16:37**).

Did Paul manifest a Christian attitude by demanding that the official come “apologize” and personally set them free? Was it “unchristian” to stand up for his rights as a citizen?”

Is it wrong for any Christian to stand up for the rights he or she has as a citizen of a country? No, even if some think that Christians ought to take any kind of abuse anyone, including the government, dishes out to them or against them.

We are fortunate to live in a country which was founded upon Christian principles and whose founding “Fathers” gave individuals certain rights. The Constitution and Bill of Rights carry more weight of authority than does a governor’s “executive order.” “The Constitution is the supreme law of the land. It established our federal government and defined our government’s relationship with the states and citizens.” [Reference: junior.scholastic.com/pages/content-hubs/us-constitution.html]

It seems that our country is going to be run by a socialist philosophy which wants to do away with the Constitution. It is not wrong for Christians to fight (not physically) to protect our rights, just as Paul did. One author acknowledges that changes have taken place, but he goes on to say,

“However, the core understanding of US democracy as a government for the people, founded in the understanding and respect for peoples' rights, has remained a continuous thread across this long scope of US political history. The Constitution is key in navigating these various political disputes, both concerning the protection or limiting of political rights as well as in the government's exercise of its political power. The Constitution is the political document that gives the US government its very legitimacy, and in these political disputes, the Constitution itself tends to be the final arbiter” (Scott David, Certified Educator).

Separation of Church and State

We have heard a lot about separation of church and state the last few years. Some politicians have used that idea to keep prayer out of public schools and federal buildings and even a plaque listing the Ten Commandments out of federal buildings. But now, they do not want separation of church and state. They want the state to tell churches what they can do and what they cannot do. (Think about what the Governor did to churches in California). That violates the principle of separation of church and state, but that does not bother those who want to control the church.

The most basic right is found in the first amendment. It says,

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Governors do not have the right to determine what religious people do in their assemblies, not even what they have to wear or not wear.

The First Amendment over-rides a state governor’s executive order. Remember, we are under the authority of the Constitution, not the governor of a state. If we do not fight for our rights, the newly elected (whether legally or by corruption), will continue to take away our rights, one at a time, until it will be against the laws of the land to do anything they deem unlawful.

We must stand up for our rights, just as Paul did. If not, it will become harder and harder to serve God in a public way. We are to pray that our government will allow us to ‘lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (**I Timothy 2:2**).

—-- *Wayne Burger, December 2020*