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FREEDOM'S FIRE

On this anniversary of 9-11 it remains vitally important for all people everywhere to consider the cost of freedom – and the true nature of human government.

Churches across the land observe "Patriots Sunday." Since the terrorist atrocities of 9/11 in 2001, millions of believers have united in prayer each year to:

- 1) Remember the sacrifices of yesterday, and those who gave their lives.
- 2) Restore every aspect of society that we can today, according to God's eternal principles of light and right.
- 3) Redeem tomorrow, so that generations to come will be set free from the strongholds of darkness.

As we've been considering the letter of 1 Peter, recall that in chapter 2:13 he wrote *"be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme or to governors as sent by Him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good."*

The very concept of authority extends from the character of God, who created mankind in His own image. Without it, anarchy would reign and no one would be safe.

In God's providence He instituted the means for "limited" civil government which the Bible reveals has three primary purposes: to protect godly people, to punish evil, and establish justice in society.

This is not a recipe for repression by divine-right tyrants. The great St Augustine advised *"Take to yourselves good Christians and you will be given good citizens"* and *"Everyone professing Christian teaching and observing its precepts will, out of love of God, perform whatever the welfare of the country demands out of self-interest and on its own behalf."*

Christians will be the best of citizens. But they are not to be the means or pawns of tyranny.

Submission to earthly authority must not violate the laws of God. Peter was with Christ when He said in Mark 12 *"render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are Gods."*

It was Peter in the book of Acts who declared *"we must obey God rather than men"* after being beaten and ordered to cease preaching about Christ.

As author of government, God has set its limits. And government is servant of the people, deriving its powers from the governed.

These truths have fueled the fires of freedom throughout history, as people have read God's Word and understood for themselves the implications of who He is and His purpose for mankind.

Early followers of Christ "turned the world upside down" because of the personal freedom that comes to all who make Jesus Christ their Lord.

Freedom in Christ transformed individuals, families, churches, communities and countries, from the Roman Empire to the present day.

When people got the Word of God and read and understood it for themselves, this unleashed the overthrow of tyranny across the world, throwing off the yokes of oppression both religious and political.

The history of America is traced directly to the translation of the Bible into English, which not only led to the Reformation in Europe but also to colonies in the New World, based on religious freedom, as true Christianity replaced the "divine right of kings" with the establishment of religious freedom.

The framers of America even designed our three branches of government from Scripture, as Isaiah 33:22 says *"The LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; He will save us."*

On the day the Declaration of Independence was signed Samuel Adams stood and declared, *"We have this day restored the Sovereign to Whom all men ought to be obedient. He reigns in heaven, and from the rising to the setting of the sun, let His kingdom come."*

As the heirs of this freedom, WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE for all this providence. How are WE guarding freedom, so that we can freely share with others the "freedom in Christ" that the world so desperately needs?

What should Christians of "the land of the free and the home of the brave" BE DOING to secure "freedom in Christ" for believers around the world ? – for those in the 55 countries whose lives are on the line, so that every five minutes someone is martyred for Christ !

How are you praying for and reaching out to help Christians in Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, and others in the Middle East, who so desperately need relief from persecution of Islamist rebel terrorists?

America was established as the greatest missionary nation the world has ever seen. How are WE carrying on that privilege?

Go to www.persecution.com.

Good citizens are informed citizens – and good citizens obey God rather than men.