



The Kingdom Perspective

Virtue and Freedom

Hello, this is Pastor Don Willeman of Christ Redeemer Church. Welcome to The Kingdom Perspective.

Freedom is a byproduct of virtue. And virtue is a byproduct of objective moral restraint. In other words, the only way you can be truly free is not by doing what you want, but by being the kind of person who does what's right. This is why the late Jonathan Sacks (1948-2020), the former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, spoke of "freedom" as a "moral achievement".¹

The Framers of our constitution understood this well. They knew the precarious position they had placed this new country in by not having a king or pope to restrain or rule over the moral behavior of the people. They understood that if the people did not voluntarily govern themselves before God, then this experiment in self-government would inevitably fail. As the great Benjamin Franklin put it:

"Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become more corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters."²

This is why Rabbi Sacks spoke out against what he identified as the "idols" of our age: "self-esteem without achievement, sex without consequences, wealth without responsibility, pleasure without struggle and experience without commitment." He correctly noted that such "relativism that tells us there is no [objective] right or wrong" leads only to nihilism, to meaninglessness. "A world without values quickly becomes a world without value" (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks). As the book of Proverbs suggests, where there is no object/divine moral law, the people become unrestrained (Proverbs 29:18). A world without objective moral truth is not a world of freedom; it is a world of chaos.

Something to think about from The Kingdom Perspective.

Proverbs 29 (ESV)

- ¹⁶ When the wicked increase, transgression increases,
but the righteous will look upon their downfall.
- ¹⁷ Discipline your son, and he will give you rest;
he will give delight to your heart.
- ¹⁸ Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint,
but blessed is he who keeps the law.
- ¹⁹ By mere words a servant is not disciplined,
for though he understands, he will not respond.

References:

¹ Speech delivered at 2016 Bradley Prize by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (2016). Accessed online at <https://rabbisacks.org/free-society-moral-achievement-read-rabbi-sacks-acceptance-speech-receiving-bradley-prize/>.

² "Letter to Messrs, the Abbes Chault, and Arnaud" by Benjamin Franklin (17 April 1787).

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