

The trouble with freedom? People

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You know the trouble with freedom? People. If it were not for people, freedom would be wonderful!

The word "freedom" has, as one of its definitions, "the quality or state of being free."

What exactly does that mean? Try these definitions: "The absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action"... "Embraces responsibility guided by reason and virtue."

In other words, freedom conveys upon its recipients the ability to act without coercion or constraint. Freedom, however, must not be confused with *license*. License implies *exercising choices without restraint* and most often involves the abuse of the freedoms of others for selfish purposes.

American freedom dictates "liberty and justice for all," clearly establishing recognition and support of the rights of others. My ability to act as a free man should always be constrained by my regard for that which my actions may produce.

Criminals and lawbreakers act with *license*. Those who rob, rape, murder and pillage, or others who drive under the influence of alcohol or abuse drugs (legal or illegal), deliberately abusing the privilege of living in a free society, must be restrained or otherwise removed from that free society.

When those who disregard the liberties of others are accorded freedom to act without restraint, society enters a de facto state of itself being constrained in choices and actions. The choice is to 1) deal diligently and speedily with antisocial behavior patterns, or 2) become subject to those who impose their hostile wills upon us by their antisocial activities. Remember, freedom embraces responsibility, reason and virtue, while license is simply acting without restraint.

Our American form of government allows idiots to be idiots, criminals to be criminals and upright law-abiding citizens to live according to the dictates of their conscience. One of the functions of government is to prevent those who refuse to abide by the biblical injunction of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" from imposing their "do unto others one-way" on society at large.

America is unique. In most of the world, people live under the iron heel of a dictator, an oligarchy, or some form of fascist or socialist government. Each of these governments by their very nature incorporates coercion or constraint. This is a de facto restriction on the right of the individual to make decisions as he will.

People who have never experienced the freedoms Americans take for granted simply have no way to comprehend the concept of "liberty and justice for all."

A tragic but illustrative example of this truth was observed on 9/11. Individuals who were free to act within the boundaries of American freedoms were enabled by the very liberties they despised to commit their heinous acts of murder. Thousands of innocent people lost their lives because these people were at liberty to act in a manner that utterly violated the rights of others. Unfortunately, there are others in this country today planning similar acts of destruction and violence, and who will do so without a moment's hesitation.

We are faced with implacable enemies. They refuse to negotiate. We cannot communicate with them because they do not understand what motivates us, and most of us do not understand what motivates them. Nevertheless, our failure to understand, or be understood, is not license to perpetuate additional acts of hostility and bloodshed in our midst.

The challenge we face is the delicate balance between "liberty and justice for all" and the possible abrogation of some of the civil rights of a few individuals. Civil rights are rights guaranteed to us by the government, with America being the preeminent example of these civil liberties granted to all. While not perfect, America still guarantees to the overwhelming majority of its citizens the unparalleled liberties of an unmatched Constitution.

Human rights, as distinct from civil rights, are rights granted by God. Civil rights for some cannot be allowed to infringe upon the human rights of all. Political correctness, as a doctrine, would imply that it is preferable to sacrifice the human rights of all rather than violate some fallacious position that the civil liberties of a few transcend the human liberties of all.

As one who is a firm believer and grateful beneficiary of civil rights and civil liberties, I still boldly affirm that the right to live in peace and security far outweighs some alleged *violation of the civil liberties* of those who would do us harm.

The Constitution, which promises "liberty," also promises "justice."