

The Right Time to Exercise Your Rights

Pastor Ross S. Russell, Church on the Beach, May 31, 2020

Text: Acts 16:35-40

1. There is a right time to exercise our rights. *John 18:23*

Barnes writes, *“though Christianity requires meekness in the reception of injuries, . . . there are occasions on which Christians may insist on their rights according to the laws . . . this is to be done particularly where the honor of religion is concerned, and where by it the gospel will be promoted.”*

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, *“According to the Bible, humans are different because, unlike all the other creatures on the planet, we are created in God’s image. Everyone bears what Christian teaching calls the imago Dei—Latin for “image of God”—and therefore are often referred to as image bearers. For this reason, humans have worth; they have value over and above anything else in creation. When this notion is applied to ethics and human rights, it is revolutionary.*

We are all made in the image of God. This is what makes our worth and our dignity inherent and inseparable from who we are, whether governments recognize human rights or not. We do not have rights because we deserve them; we do not have rights because we have earned them; we do not have rights because we are white or black, male or female, American or Chinese. We have rights because each of us is made in the image of God and therefore has inherent worth and dignity.” --Christianity Today, “The Bible’s Impact on Human Kind”

2. Exercise your rights for the good of the church. *Acts 16:37*

Our discussion today about standing up for your rights is not about getting revenge or accomplishing a personal vendetta or mission. Our goal should be for the good of our family. For the good of our family business. When we seek to establish our character and freedom as a Christian legally by exercising our rights it is good for the church.

3. Avoid an attitude of entitlement. *Matthew 10:39, Romans 12:3, 16; James 2:1-4*

We have a culture of entitlement now that thinks that they are entitled to take the money of the rich. God wants those who have much to be generous but we can’t demand that they give it to the poor. That is between them and the Lord. We need to trust the Lord for our needs. And give as the Lord enables us.

4. Jesus gave us the right to become children of God if we believe and receive Him. *John 1:12*